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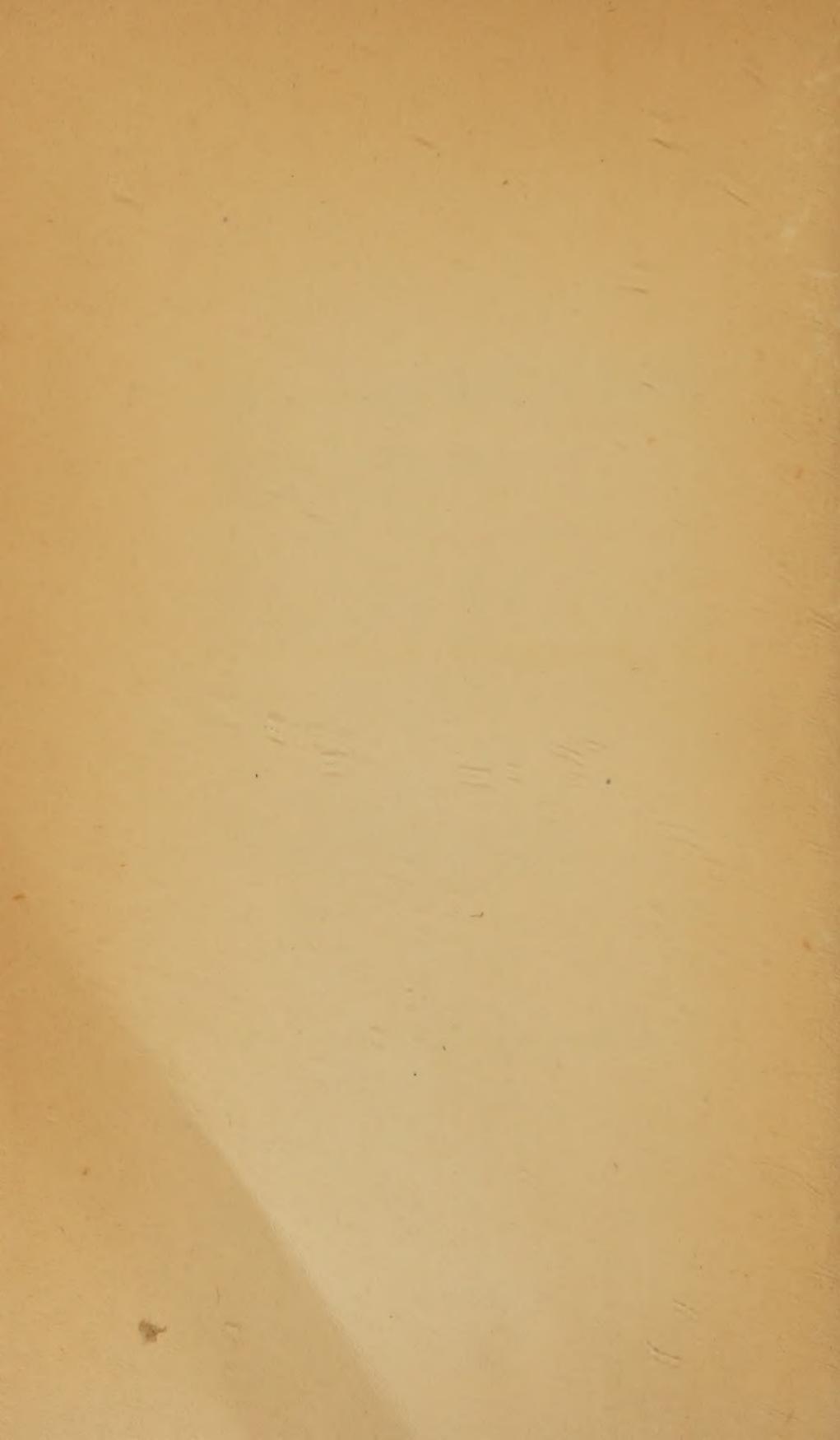
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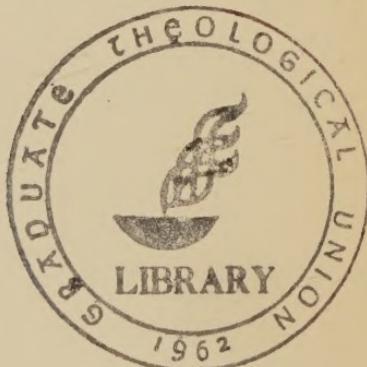
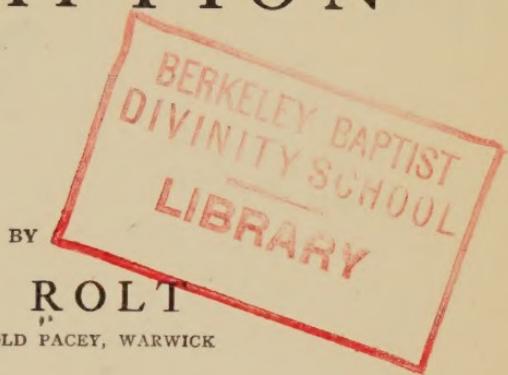
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THE WORLD'S REDEMPTION

THE WORLD'S REDEMPTION

BY
C. E. ROLT
VICAR OF NEWBOLD PACEY, WARWICK



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P R E F A C E

PARTS of Chapters I, II, VIII and XI have already, under a slightly different guise, formed the substance of four articles in *The English Church Review*, and my grateful thanks are owing to the Editor for permission to use the material again; but *The English Church Review* must not be held responsible for opinions contained in other portions of the essay.

A similar remark applies to the bearer of the initials which I am privileged to place on the dedication page. His acceptance of a book with which he will not entirely agree, springs from the fearless sincerity of his own convictions. I value it greatly, as it enables me to acknowledge, however unworthily, an altogether immeasurable debt which can never be repaid in this life.

My thanks are due to the many friends who have helped me with advice and encouragement, and also with assistance in the drudgery of preparing the book for the press. And I am glad to take this opportunity of thanking Mrs. Romanes and Messrs. Longman for kindly allowing me to make use of the quotation from

the late Professor Romanes' *Darwin and after Darwin* which appears, through their courtesy, in Chapter V.

If there appears in any of the following pages to be a somewhat assertive dogmatism, this will not, it is hoped, be set down to a lack of humility. It is impossible for a man to speak with hesitation of the life-belt which saves him from drowning; and where the language is uncompromising, my excuse must be that I am trying, though hampered by limitations of which I am not unconscious, to offer no mere personal opinion, but what I am driven to regard as a rather obvious deduction from the Gospel. Moreover, ultimate things admit of no hazy outlines, and I have therefore been anxious, avoiding all qualifications, to make the opposition between two great alternatives as clear-cut as possible. Those who reject the main contention of the essay, will thus, it is hoped, at least know the nature of the thing they are rejecting.

I can but end with the oft-quoted words: *Domine, quaecunque dixi de Tuo agnoscant et Tui: si qua de meo, et Tu ignosce, et Tui.*

C. E. R.

October 1913.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD	1
II.	THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD (<i>continued</i>)	38
III.	CHANCE AND DESIGN	62
IV.	THE HOLY TRINITY AND CREATION	95
V.	EVOLUTION AND HUMAN PERSONALITY	128
VI.	THE PROBLEM OF EVIL	152
VII.	CHRIST THE FULFILLER	189
VIII.	CHRIST THE REDEEMER	221
IX.	REDEMPTIVE CREATION	253
X.	REDEMPTIVE CREATION (<i>continued</i>)	278
XI.	THE REDEEMER AND THE REDEEMED	306

THE WORLD'S REDEMPTION

CHAPTER I

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

ACROSS the process of evolution is written one great law: first that which is natural and afterwards that which is spiritual. For, as the process advances, each stage leads on to another and a higher one, and matter thus becomes the vehicle of a gradually expanding spiritual principle. So it is that we advance from the inorganic to the organic world, and again from the vegetable to the animal kingdom, or yet again from the brute to man. And so, once more, in human life itself is there the great and final advance from the natural man who understandeth not the things of the Kingdom of God, to the spiritual man who, having received a new birth from on high, is conscious of an eternal worth and of a glorious destiny for which he struggles and yearns. In every case the lower order comes first, and is made a stepping-stone leading on to higher things. And, when the higher things have come, we can read into the lower order, which alone made their first coming possible, a meaning which we could not see there before.

Thus it is that the world proceeds as it fulfils its heavenly destiny. So far as any meaning can be read

into the process, we can only say that it is becoming more and more spiritual, and that the whole material fabric is being gradually lifted up to higher and yet higher planes.

But not only do we see this law at work in the process of the outward universe : the same great truth applies to the process of the inward world of human thought. As the mind of man grows and, growing, tries, little by little, to understand the system in which it finds itself, it follows, and cannot but follow, the same great law. In the intellectual, moral and religious life of the human race there comes first that which is natural, and only at a later stage of development, that which is spiritual. This principle conditions all human beliefs, and is the invariable method by which they have come into being.

There is in man a marvellous hidden life, which from the beginning of his existence lies dormant in his nature. Infinite, mysterious, inexplicable, it belongs to a region beyond the stars, and when it awakes it cannot but seek its own eternal home. But to awake, it needs arousing. It must escape from the lethargy of blank unconsciousness which holds it fast. And for this a stimulus is necessary. A continuous trumpet-call must sound in the sleeper's ear to summon him from the land of shadows into the region of wakeful day. Without it, he will not cast off the numb torpor that entralls him, but will continue for ever to slumber on his oblivious couch.

If man is finally to learn his glorious heavenly destiny, he must first of all be awakened into conscious life. And, for this great process of awaking, the world of sense is needed. From this external world there

comes a mighty stimulus, which, as it presses on the man unceasingly each day, each hour, each moment, calls gradually forth some tiny fragment of his boundless hidden powers. The man must act, or he cannot survive in the struggle to exist; acting, he begins vaguely and unconsciously to think; thinking, he begins dimly and little by little to know: and thus by slow degrees there dawns his natural consciousness.

Thus the material world performs this necessary service. It awakens man into conscious activity and stimulates his mental life. It starts him on that spiritual career the proper end of which is God.

And yet along with these great benefits there are counterbalancing drawbacks. Material things are needed to arouse man from his slumber; but at the same time they tend, very often, to arrest his progress at the point to which they have brought it. Having awakened the man up to a certain degree, they may hinder him from becoming more fully wide-awake. Their imperious call, sounding in his ears, makes it impossible for him any longer to remain asleep; but yet, through its very loudness, it may prevent him from catching those gentler and more mysterious tones which none but the most sensitive and wakeful ear can receive. The hard light of common day breaks in upon his torpor, bidding him arise and move and act. But this same light so dazzles his eyes that he cannot see, nor does he even seek to find, the distant prospect where earth melts into heaven and all things are subdued into a soft radiance of eternal glory.

Man finds himself in a material world. All around him are things which he can use for his own purposes —for food or fuel, for raiment or for building. All

around are obstacles and dangers which he must escape or else must seek to subdue. In his constant struggle to maintain and develop his being, the world of matter meets him at every turn as the great insistent reality from which he cannot get away. And while it enables him, in the first place, to become conscious of himself, on the other hand it checks and limits all the actions of his mind. It frees his natural life from its prison of unconsciousness ; but, having released it from this captivity it binds it with chains of iron, lest this same natural life, having been thus liberated, should pass on beyond material boundaries and enter the region of the spirit. It is but fair to say that these fetters also prevent the rescued captive from returning once more to its dungeon. Nevertheless they do beyond a doubt prevent it from passing on to a wider liberty.

The material world is, then, in the first place, everything to the awakening mind of man. It limits him on every side, and he cannot get beyond it. True it is that, with that strange instinct of awe which is planted deep within the human heart, he peoples the mountain and the trees and all things around him with spirits of good or evil ; true that a mysterious principle within him is thus trying to claim its rights ; true that, even from the first, the natural world in which man lives is intertwined for him with a supernatural element and reveals to him a spiritual presence : nevertheless it is the natural world that entirely dominates his mind and he is in bondage to the tyranny of the senses. His spiritual intuitions do not outrun his natural perceptions. His notions of the unseen world are gross, crude and material. He

believes in spirits, but he does not, in any real, spiritual sense, exalt them above the material objects in which he conceives them to dwell, and from which he in a dim, half-unconscious way infers their existence. It is only by means of the natural world that he is able to obtain the smallest glimpse of the supernatural world beyond it. His senses are the starting-point of all his spiritual consciousness.

So much for the spiritual perception of the primitive savage. And the same fact is true to some extent of nearly all, and perhaps of all, mankind in their highest spiritual development. The mystic and the saint have generally been helped in their deepest religious intuitions by the presence around them of the material world. Whether in the countless glories of Nature or in the rites and services of a Church, material facts have presented themselves to their bodily senses of hearing and of sight; and these outward things have evoked within them an inward instinct of the spirit which, being thus aided and fostered, has grown from strength to strength. And, though the spirit as it grows may learn to be less dependent on all earthly helps, and though in that heavenly kingdom where they see face to face all types are finally done away, yet the material world is necessary, while we live upon this earth, for awaking into action the slumbering powers of the human soul. Only a few favoured ones have been enabled, at times of peculiar exaltation, to become, in their clear perception of that other world, almost independent of this and unconscious of its existence. In the growth of man's inward life the perception of the material world comes before his perception of the spiritual.

And here, as so often, the facts of human speech illustrate the law which is at work. It is almost impossible for words to deal directly with anything but the world of matter; and when man tries to speak of the inward processes of the spirit, he is generally obliged to fall back upon the merest metaphor. The very terms for "soul" and "spirit" in more languages than one, mean originally nothing else than "breath," and thus contain in brief that splendid image by which the Book of Genesis describes the creation of the human race.

Yet more striking are the facts of human language in relation to space and time. For it will be found that, while space can never be spoken of in terms of time, on the other hand it is almost impossible to speak of time except in terms of space. We speak of a long or of a short time, of a length of time, of a lapse (*i.e.* a "gliding") of time, and again of a "point" or even of a "space" of time, as when we say that a thing happened "within a short space." And the only possible way by which we can express the connection of an event with its duration is to say that it happens *in* the time or that it occupies the time. On the other hand, we cannot possibly speak of a "duration" of space. And yet this very word "duration" was originally bound up with space, coming in the first instance from the Latin "*durus*," and deriving the notion of permanence ultimately from that of hardness. So, too, the word "period," which can only be applied to time, possessed in the original Greek a spatial reference and meant simply a "course" or "journey." We always, in fact, speak and think of time as a sort of line going on in one direction or as a sort of space with only one

dimension ; nor can we speak of it in any other way. And this fact suggests the conclusion that our whole conception of time comes to us, in the first instance, only through our conception of space.

But space is the home of the material world. Each object has its position in space, and when we think of it merely as a material thing, we consider it merely by the light of this fact. We ignore its power of growth or movement (which are the sign of a vital principle within it) and think only of the fact that it occupies a certain place. Time, on the other hand, is the home of spiritual facts. For not only does the movement which is inseparable from natural life, demand time as well as space for its working, yet further than this all the mental and spiritual activity of man moves, not directly in the sphere of space at all, but wholly in that of time. Thought and will and emotion, hatred and love, fear and desire, are all connected, indeed, with a body and a brain which exist in space, but they themselves, because they are spiritual, belong to a world only of time. And thus the facts of human speech, in which we can speak of time, as a rule, only through spatial metaphors, suggest that the human mind comes to a definite consciousness of spiritual things only by means of the material world. And beyond a doubt they illustrate the fact that nearly all language dealing with spiritual things must necessarily be made up of material metaphors.

Thus the spiritual qualities of man are for the most part beyond the reach of words, and can but be suggested by appropriate metaphors. We speak of a man's character as deep, of his imagination as lofty, of his sympathies as wide, of his genius as splendid, and

in every instance we are using a figure of speech borrowed from the world of matter and space. The words are, indeed, suited to their purpose, and they certainly express our meaning. But at the same time they are being now used in a new and spiritual sense which is more wonderful than that which they originally possessed. The height and the depth and the wide-embracing expanse of the universe on whose mighty fabric we are supported is full of unspeakable mystery and awe, but it is as nothing compared with the height and the depth and the width of the human mind and soul as it rises aloft and sinks into the Divine abyss and spreads its being in endless expansion on the bosom of Eternity.

Human intellect, human genius, human holiness, these are greater things than the greatness of the universe ; and when we speak of the heights and depths of human character we are using earthly metaphors — the best and only kind of language possible—for that which is not of this world.

And because all such language is but metaphor, therefore it is true, but therefore also it may be misleading. It is true; for the earth with all its glories bears a kinship to the hidden glories of the human mind and heart. It may yet be misleading; for one conscious living being is far more wonderful than the whole unconscious universe.

Man is then himself a mystery eluding human words. Much more so is the God in Whom his being has its roots. Here is an immeasurable height which no human foot can scale; here an abysmal depth which no human plummet can fathom. Here is that ineffable mystery of the Infinite which breaks loose

from all fetters of man's finite thought and language. Here is that distant home which beckons to man's throbbing heart from beyond the utmost margin of all things, that home of rest to which man, from amidst the din and glare of this close world, strains both eye and ear with fruitless longing as he tries to descry its shadowy outlines and to catch the echoes of its tranquil harmony. Ever he strives, and ever is doomed to fail. His earthly surroundings, which have moulded all his forms of speech and all his mental habits, afford him but the sorriest means by which to make articulate his dim and vague surmise. And so he says, as he tries to reach the truth, that God is more great and glorious than earthly kings and conquerors, that He is more terrible in His majesty than the fury of the elements, that He is mightier than all the terrific forces which drive the world upon its way.

All of which is true. God is more great and glorious, more terrible and mighty, than all things in the material world. And yet such language is most misleading, for these qualities in God are wholly spiritual and our terms are derived from the world of matter. And thus our words are nothing but the merest hint of the reality; and if we apply them in a literal and earthly sense, they become absolutely false. We say that God is great, and this is perfectly true. God is infinitely great, for He is greater than the boundless universe which draws its life from Him. And therefore the vastness of the material world may rightly give us thoughts of His Infinitude and suggest to us the language in which those thoughts can be expressed. But, on the other hand, the greatness of God

is different from all earthly magnitude. It cannot be meted with a measuring-rod or conceived in terms of material proportion. We cannot say that it is so many yards or miles or leagues in height or depth or vastness. We cannot even say that it is of an infinite number of yards or miles or leagues. God is not tied down to matter and space. He is Spirit, and to Him such tests do not apply. And therefore, while He is infinitely great, yet He exists wholly and indivisibly in this place and in that, and in every point and spot of the whole spatial world.

Thus, then, we have a plain and simple rule to use. Whenever we apply to God any words drawn from the outward world of matter and of space, such words, while true and necessary so far as they go, will always become wholly false unless used in a purely spiritual sense. And it will be found that such a spiritual use of terms will finally give them a meaning exactly contrary to that which they possess in this material world. The greater a thing is in this world, the greater is the number of inches or yards or miles into which we can divide it. And yet the Being of God, Who is infinitely great, is, for that very reason, indivisible, and cannot be apportioned into miles or yards or even inches. And thus the conception of size or magnitude, which we draw from the material world and rightly apply to God, teaches us, indeed, a truth about His Being, and yet, in Him, must contradict all our earthly notions.

Now there is one conception which more than any other enters into all our theological beliefs. It is the conception of omnipotence. "I believe in God the Father Almighty" are the words in which we express our fundamental conviction as to the Divine Nature,

and, in fact, "the Almighty" is often used in common parlance as a mere synonym for "God."

This notion of omnipotence, like all human conceptions, has behind it a long history. And, like all human conceptions, it first came to man direct from the material world.

We look around us, and on all sides we see the mighty forces of Nature. These continually struggle one against another; and that which is the strongest overrides the rest. We see the action of the winds and storms, or of the cataracts and the ocean waves as they press along with resistless fury and drive before them all that would obstruct their course. We see the avalanche and the volcano and the terrific cataclysms of Nature, and in their presence we feel that we are powerless, as they sweep whole villages and towns to destruction. We see above all things the working of one mighty law—that law of gravitation which nothing can resist. All around us we see force at work breaking down all barriers and compelling all things to obey it.

Moreover, we are conscious that we possess within our being a mysterious power of will. By this power we form a purpose and we seek to carry it into effect. And, though our will is ultimately a spiritual thing, yet we first become aware of its existence when we find it acting by means of our bodies on the material world of which they form a part. It presents itself to us, in fact, as a kind of inward reservoir of material force. I will to move a stone from my path, and at once my body obeys the impulse. I give the stone a push with my foot and, in so doing, I exercise that coercion which is the law of the whole material world. The stone resists me, but I try to tear it from its place.

I am using compulsion and brute force. If I succeed in uprooting it, then I am stronger than the stone ; if, on the other hand, it defies all my efforts, then it is stronger than I.

Thus there is all around us a principle of force ; and when we act within the world as parts of the vast material system, this is the one principle which we cannot but employ. Throughout the material universe the same fact always holds good. That thing we regard as the most powerful which can crush and coerce the rest. The ant is more powerful than the grain of corn, for she can move it from its place ; man is more powerful than the ant, for he can crush her under his foot ; the avalanche is more powerful than man, for it can sweep him into the gulf below, and the mountain is more powerful than the avalanche, which cannot sweep it away.

Such is the earthly conception familiar to us all ; and it is at this point that most men start when they try to conceive of the Divine Omnipotence. If the ant is stronger than the grain of corn, if man is stronger than the ant, if the avalanche is stronger than man, the mountain than the avalanche, the earth than the mountain, and the whole universe than the earth, the mind is brought at last to One Who is yet stronger than the universe itself, and Who, just as man by the act of his will moves the pebble from his path, so by the act of an almighty will, which nothing can resist, bends all things to His purposes and compels the whole material system to obey His irresistible commands. God checks and controls the universe, we are told, by His almighty power. He can at will raise aloft and cast down again, drive onward and restrain, create and

destroy, without let or hindrance from anything in the world. His power consists of infinite force.

This conception of the nature of omnipotence is accepted by most Christians as a part of the Divine revelation. It is firmly embedded in all popular theology, and unhappily finds a place in most theology that claims to be philosophic. True, the philosophic theologian does his best as a rule to explain it away so far as he can with much talk about God's "self-limitation" or the necessity of His obeying the laws He has Himself made for His universe. Nevertheless the fact remains that this conception of despotic force is for him, as for the generality of mankind, the only conception of the Divine Power. He may, in practice, treat it as a piece of lumber, but he regards it in theory as a piece of necessary lumber, however useless and inconvenient. And therefore he allows it to remain blocking out the light and air in his theological edifice, instead of boldly throwing it out of the window. And hence when he becomes vaguely conscious that it does not harmonise with the main lines of the building it occupies or with the rest of the furniture around it, instead of turning the useless thing out and casting it on to the rubbish-heap, he contents himself with raising a dust of words which serve, for the moment, to disguise its hideous outlines and hide them from his sight.

The truth is that the conception of an omnipotence consisting in a kind of infinite brute force is immoral, irrational and anti-Christian, and from this fruitful source have sprung some of the worst travesties of the Christian Faith which have ever hindered the Gospel of God. It owes its origin to a sheer misunderstanding

of the most elementary kind. A notion of power derived from the material world has been applied to God in a gross material sense, and it has been supposed that His power resembles in nature, while transcending only in degree, that force which shows itself in the earthquake and the tempest and the fury of the elements. Hence it is that God is regarded as one Who could, if He liked, intervene at any moment to prevent the miseries or the wickedness of this world, but Who does not do so because He sees good reasons for restraining His hand. His power, forsooth, is limited by His wisdom !

But let us turn from such unsatisfying notions as these and look at the matter by the light of the principle stated a short time back. We saw that when we apply a spatial and material category to God, we must spiritualise its meaning. And we further saw that, when spiritualised, it will possess a meaning the exact opposite of its original and earthly one. How does this affect the question of God's omnipotence ?

Earthly power is that which can coerce and compel. It can crush opposing forces and can break and bend things to its will. If this is so, it follows that heavenly power, which is the reality of which all earthly power is but the distorted shadow, can do none of these things, but can only do their opposites. Thus heavenly power cannot crush opposing forces ; it can only suffer and be crushed by them. It cannot break or bend anything to its will ; it can only be bent and broken and yet remain unconquered. It cannot consist of coercive brute force ; but only of still and patient endurance. In a word, it cannot drive and compel ; it can only hope and wait.

Now, in human life we find that compulsion is the natural and congenial method of characters which are hard and selfish and wanting in sympathy. On the other hand, the quality which gives men patient endurance and enables them to suffer and be crushed, and yet, even in defeat, to know that they are strong, is unselfishness and love. This may sometimes take the form of devotion to a noble cause, and may be called patriotism or even mere sense of duty, but love it always is, for its nature is self-sacrifice. And love, at its truest, can but suffer silently and patiently; it cannot struggle or complain. Knowing its own mysterious secret, it cannot force these treasures upon others who are not yet able to see them. It must wait and hope, in its own sure confidence, for the time when the blind eyes shall be open and its secret shall be revealed to those from whom it now is hid. It cannot cast its pearls before swine; it can but look forward to the day when those who now are as the swine shall have lost their grosser nature and shall turn with delight and wonder to the costly jewel which it holds within its casket. Hatred, anger and selfish passion fill the world with noise; love is always dumb:

“What shall Cordelia do? Love and be silent.”¹

Hence it would seem that the omnipotence of God, because it is the exact opposite of brute force, because it cannot coerce or drive or overwhelm, but can only wait and attract and patiently endure, is therefore nothing else than love itself. It consists in love, and has no other quality whatsoever. Love is, in fact, the only real power, and force is not power at all, but is a

¹ *King Lear*, Act i. sc. 1, l. 63.

mere distortion of the true reality. Brute force is not strong, but is, if we could see it with the eyes of God, mere feebleness and impotence. To say that God has infinite love, and that to this love is added infinite power, is totally and utterly false. He has nothing besides that perfect Love which is Himself. God is Love, and this Love is itself His power, nor can we truly conceive of Him as possessing any other power besides.

Such are the results to which we are driven when we put the ordinary conceptions of popular theology to a rigorous test. But we have a far surer foundation on which to build than what may appear to be a mere logical subtlety. We have the experience of those who have drunk deepest of the ultimate springs of life. We have the teachings of the prophets and of the saints; above all, we have the Life and teaching of the Incarnate Word Himself.

God's revelation to the world rests ultimately on the experience of the human heart as it struggles upward towards the light. Hence, if we wish to understand any truth concerning His Eternal Being, we shall do so best by questioning those to whom the largest measure of this light has been revealed. They in such moments have seen and known the truth, and they can speak to us with authority. To such men, who have caught a glimpse from within the heavenly temple, we give the name of poet; and, if they are among that favoured band which, not content with gazing from the threshold, has entered through the door, we give them the yet greater name of mystic.

Let us begin with the testimony of one to whom

both of these names may be applied. In Wordsworth's *Prelude* there occurs the following passage—

“This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist
Without Imagination, which, in truth,
Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind
And Reason in her most exalted mood.”¹

The poet is conscious of possessing an absolute power, in having which he is strong. And this power is not a gross or earthly thing. It does not consist in any outward display, nor yet in any ability to bend other men to his will. It is identical with imagination, insight and illumination of the mind. It is the vital essence of spiritual love. It has nothing akin to the brute force of a machine. It is tranquil, gentle and patient. It gives the poet a sense, amidst outward troubles, of possessing the truth within his heart. And therefore he is never without hope, “knowing what he has learnt to know.” This inward power of his cannot alter or abolish the hard facts of life, but it can do something of a nobler kind. It can bear them and, in its own indomitable strength, retain unshaken peace.

“Hence, amid ills that vex and wrongs that crush
Our hearts—if here the words of Holy Writ
May with fit reverence be applied—that peace
Which passeth understanding, that repose
In moral judgments which from this pure source
Must come, or will by man be sought in vain.”²

To Wordsworth, then, was vouchsafed a sense of the Divine Power sustaining him ; and this power he experienced as something totally different from the unlimited brute force which is generally ascribed to

¹ Bk. xiv. 188, *et seq.*

² *Ibid.* 124, *et seq.*

God. It cannot be denied that Wordsworth himself elsewhere uses language implying this crude conception of popular theology ; but all such passages belong to his later years and are destitute of poetic inspiration. In these he is writing, not of his own experience, but as the apologist of what he fondly believes to be Christian orthodoxy. This tradition he would have regarded it as impious to criticise, and, indeed, he did not desire to do so. And thus he fell into the unconscious delusion of identifying this utterly incongruous addition to his spiritual faith with the true foundation-stone which he derived from his mystic experience. Even the greatest minds are capable of holding at the same time two contradictory conceptions—the one a passionate conviction derived from what they have experienced and forming the master-principle of their being, and the other a dead opinion which they accept on the authority of others and manage to tolerate for the sole reason that it does not influence their deeper lives.

Different in much from Wordsworth, below him in balance of mind and far below him in moral strength, was his contemporary Shelley. And yet this passionate spirit was consumed by that same fire which burned in Wordsworth's bosom. And to him also were vouchsafed, though fitfully through the vapours of his lower nature, gleams and flashes of the mystic vision. And in his greatest poetry the gleams are gathered into one intense and dazzling ray which pierces far into the wild and fearful void. Shelley, though his life, like David's of old, was in many things deplorable, yet, when his nobler spirit was awake, possessed moments of penetrating insight from which we may thankfully learn.

The whole conception of that sublime work *Prometheus Unbound* is a conception of spiritual power. Prometheus, the divine spirit in man, is encompassed by the relentless forces of hard fate, and yet endures and hopes. The fearful vision of the world's agony burns like molten lead into his soul, but still he will not yield. He is powerless and helpless, bound and tortured by his foes ; and yet in this feebleness and agony he is strong and triumphs over his tormentors' fury. And, by his patient meekness, he finally comes to the day of his release, which is the deliverance of the captive human race. And then the play concludes with that splendid pæan which celebrates the final victory—

“ This is the day which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born’s voice yawns for heaven’s despotism,
And conquest is dragged captive through the deep.
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.”

The poet here, as throughout the play, speaks of heaven as the seat of that grim despotism under which the divine spirit of man has been groaning. And he does so precisely because of the popular conception which regards God’s omnipotence as a kind of vast coercive force. The thing he is attacking is not religion itself, still less is it Christianity, but is that Natural Religion which Blake in a wonderful passage denounces as the deadly foe of Christ. But the deep significance of the stanza lies in its conception of the patient power of love. The force of outward might belongs to the savage tyranny which holds man its

hapless thrall, but all the time the true power is in the suffering victim, because he can endure in the patient strength of love.

Still more clearly is this fact brought out in the final stanza of all—

“To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite ;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent ;
To love, and bear ; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent :
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free—
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.”

The true power of Prometheus is pitted against the counterfeit power of his tormentor, and his victory consists, not in any ability to crush the relentless foe, but in the fact that he can suffer, can hope, and can forgive. It consists in the fact that, while appearing to be weak, he is inwardly strong in the invincible strength of love, and thus possesses the only true life and joy in the midst of his bondage and outward misery. The power to crush opposition is the false power “that seems omnipotent”; the power to be crushed and yet not to falter is the true power which seems like weakness and yet is strong to defy its foes.

There have, in fact, lived in every age of civilisation certain favoured men who have known what others dimly guess. To some, who were unworthy of greater illumination, this knowledge has come in fitful flashes breaking through the gloom and shadow : to others, nobler and more deserving souls, it has been granted as a settled possession of never-failing day.

But in every case the quality of the light has been in the main alike. Such men have turned their eyes from outward things and looked into their own hearts. There they have found an infinite world opening far within, more wonderful and unspeakably glorious than the whole material fabric: and there they have attained to that “everlasting sureness” of which one mystic¹ speaks,—even, in Wordsworth’s language “the consciousness of whom they are.” They have plunged into the abyss of the spirit, and there they seem at last to have touched the ground. They have come down to that ultimate “I AM” which lies at the root of each man’s personal being. And in this blessed consciousness they have known themselves to be strong. They have known themselves to be greater and grander than the whole universe itself: they have known that, though the vast and pitiless forces of Nature should unite to crush them body and soul, yet the victory would still be theirs because there was in them some deep mystery of being which no force could ever touch.

A conviction such as this it is that permeates the New Testament. This is St. John’s experience of a victory consisting in nothing but faith.² And this it is that meets us on every page of the writings of St. Paul. Hence it is that he holds faith and not works to be the one grand need of every man; since that which saves a Christian is nothing that he can do, but only what he *is* in Christ Who is his ultimate Life. And in this consciousness it is that he is persuaded that “neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor

¹ Julian of Norwich.

² 1 St. John v. 4.

powers nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God." Deep in the depths of his heart and soul he had found the ultimate Principle of his being, and this was far beyond the reach of this world's restless changes.

Such, then, was St. Paul's experience of the infinite power of God.

Neither he, of course, nor any other of the New Testament writers, explicitly discards the popular theory. Probably they would all alike, if asked to explain the meaning of omnipotence, have explained it in the popular way. The inspired writers, of the Old and of the New Testament alike, knew by their experience that God was almighty, for they had felt His power within their souls. And, knowing the fact, they were not concerned to criticise its nature. Enough for them that God was strong. Knowing this, they accepted all that it was imagined to imply. And, since in popular theory omnipotence was supposed to imply the power to crush force with greater force, they acquiesced in the notion and received it without criticism. Like Wordsworth in modern times, they accepted the tradition in which they had been born and bred.

But while the inspired writers acquiesced in the popular tradition which had come to be regarded as a part of God's revelation to men, they make but little use of it, and it has no place in their deepest religious experience. There are, of course, a very few passages where St. Paul, for instance, tries to square the facts of life with the false conception of omnipotence; and the result is a hopeless difficulty with no satisfactory solution. An

example is the verse in the Epistle to the Romans about the potter and the vessel made to dis-honour¹—a verse not easy to reconcile with the main body of Pauline teaching. And the difficulty in such passages is due to the fact that the Apostle is encumbered with a traditional notion alien from that which he has learnt in his own religious life. He struggles to untie the baffling knot, because through the force of ancient custom it does not occur to him to cut it in twain ; but the knot resists his efforts and remains a source of perplexity.

If, however, we put aside the few passages where St. Paul is giving a conception which he has inherited from tradition, and not experienced in his life, there can be no doubt what was the nature of that spiritual power which he felt as his constant support. It was a power in which he could do “all things” through Him Who gave him strength ; and in this triumphant consciousness he did not feel that he could force all the world to do his bidding, but only that he could continue steadfast amidst his trials and temptations. He felt that the grace of God had brought him into a glorious spiritual region in which while dying yet he lived, while having nothing he yet possessed all things. In this grand conviction he knows that God has chosen the things that are weak to confound those that are mighty ; in this same conviction he can write to his converts those triumphant words : “All things are yours.” And this he could write not because they were rich in any outward influence or wealth, but solely because they possessed the ultimate mysteries of life. They possessed, amid outward sorrows,

¹ Rom. ix. 18-22.

the secret of true happiness, and in their outward poverty the abounding riches of God. The strength of God is made perfect in weakness ; and by it the Apostle can say : " When I am weak then I am strong." God's grace is sufficient for him, and in that grace he finds patience to endure. In it he and all the followers of the Crucified Saviour are " more than conquerors."

St. Paul, then, finds within himself a power of patient love, and this power he recognises as the work of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit within the human heart bears witness to the whole nature and being of God. " The Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the sons of God." Therefore there can be in God nothing that contradicts this inward testimony. As is the Spirit of God within the human heart, such is God in His own eternal nature. And therefore, if the power of God within man's being consists wholly in patient love, such as this, and nothing else, must be the power whereby He is omnipotent. If the weakness of God is stronger than men, it is only because God's strength consists entirely in weakness ; and if the " word of the cross " is " the power of God," it is because God's omnipotence consists in nothing else than His power to suffer pain.

But the ultimate and final test, and indeed the only certain source of all our knowledge concerning God, must be sought for in the Person of our Lord. Because He is perfect God, therefore all that can be known about God is contained completely in Him. And all the unlovely conceptions that have disfigured the theology of Christendom have arisen from the

fact that men have pictured God according to their own fancy instead of looking for Him solely in Jesus Christ. They have fashioned for themselves the notion of a great and mighty despot, to whom they have given the name of God ; and then (according as they have been orthodox or the reverse) they have either identified or failed to identify Jesus Christ with this figment of their fancy. The whole process is a false one and cannot lead to the truth. Our method should be of the opposite kind. The human heart cannot but recognise in Christ the absolute and final Ideal. Recognising this, it is constrained to repeat the language of Peter : "To whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And hence will result this strong conviction : Either Jesus Christ is God, or else there is no God at all. For if, after much abstruse argument, we came to the conclusion that the maker of this world was a being different in nature from the essentials of that Life which is depicted in the Gospels, this being would certainly not be one whom the Christian could recognize as God. And had he made the universe ten times over, yet in so far as he was opposed to that one perfect Life, he would merit and, let us trust, obtain not our worship, but our contemptuous defiance.

Starting, then, with the conviction that Jesus Christ is perfect God, what is the result at which we arrive ? What notion of omnipotence shall we derive from Him ? What is His peculiar power and triumph ? The answer is clear. Christ taught, not only by word but also by deed and by the whole tenor of His earthly Life, that spiritual power consists in weakness and spiritual triumph in suffering. In the kingdom

of heaven all values are transposed. The truth is hidden from the wise ones of this earth and revealed unto babes.¹ Everything that this world regards as great is there regarded as contemptible, and everything that this world despises as mean and lowly is there the only greatness. The methods of this world are there reversed, where none can enter but the humble of heart.

Therefore it was that when the disciples desired the Lord to call down fire on those who rejected Him, He replied : "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."² Compulsion is alien from the spirit of that kingdom, the law of which is love. Therefore, again, it was that when they disputed as to which should be the greatest, He set a little child in the midst of them and rebuked their worldly pride.³ But most striking of all are those words in which He directly contrasts the kingdom of heaven with all the kingdoms of this earth.⁴ An earthly kingdom is based on the principle of self, and its rulers have outward pomp and titles of honour. They can command the obedience of their subjects and exact their service by compulsion. But in the heavenly kingdom it is not so. There the foundation principle is not self but unselfishness, and the rulers have none of the vain pomp and glory of this world. They cannot use compulsion or exact obedience and service. The higher their rank in the heavenly kingdom the more are they the servants of all ; and the Son of Man shows that He is the absolute Lord precisely in this, that He came not to

¹ St. Matthew xi. 25.

² St. Luke ix. 55.

³ St. Mark ix. 33-37 ; St. Luke ix. 46-48.

⁴ St. Mark x. 42-45 ; St. Matthew xx. 25-28 ; St. Luke xxii. 24-30.

be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Even if we could for a moment shut our eyes to the Divinity of Him Who is that Son of Man, yet there could be no doubt as to the conception of God which these words imply. If God resembles the law of His own kingdom, it is clear that He is its Heavenly King precisely because He is meek and humble and lowly, and that He rules His subjects solely in this fact, that He is the Servant of them all.

Throughout the Gospel story there is a wide gulf separating the disciples from the thoughts of their Divine Master. All through His ministry they were expecting earthly greatness, earthly triumph, earthly power and might. And the greatness and triumph and power which He proclaimed were not of earth but of heaven, and consisted in humbleness of heart, in poverty and shame, in weakness and failure and defeat. They were at every turn misunderstanding His words because they could not get rid of their crude earthly notions. And the greater part of that training which He gave them consisted in a patient struggle to turn their cherished notions upside down.

Now, at the root of all their notions of earthly triumph lay precisely the conception of a God whose omnipotence consisted in coercive force. And at the root of all those thoughts which Christ was putting in their place was the conception of a God Whose omnipotence consisted not in coercive force but in enduring love. Take away the ordinary theory of the power of Almighty God, and all the vain opinions which darkened the disciples' vision must crumble to

the ground. Substitute the opposite theory of a God Who is almighty only in the fact that He is completely unselfish, and the truth which Christ proclaimed will follow of necessity.

The Lord did not, indeed, proclaim a philosophical theory on the subject. He dealt as a rule not so much with theories of abstract thought as with principles of concrete life. The men among whom He had to work were not used to metaphysical argument. They would not have been strongly moved by a philosophical theory if it had been put before them, nor, in fact, would they have grasped it at all. Let them learn to live in communion with God as the great fact of their spiritual life, and they would tend more and more, as time went on, to form a right theory for themselves : in the course of centuries the Spirit of God would lead His Church into all truth. But, though the mental condition of the disciples made it impossible for them to have the true conception put before them as an abstract theory, the Lord at any rate refrained from using definite terms that might have given countenance to the theory which they possessed. He speaks of His Father as "Lord of Heaven and earth," and such a phrase implies omnipotence. At the same time, he never uses the word "almighty" (*παντοκράτωρ*) as an epithet of God. And the reason would appear to be plain. Such a word was bound up with a crude conception of coercive power, and its associations would therefore be harmful. However appropriate in its true and spiritual sense, it would be most certainly misinterpreted and would hinder the cause of the Truth.

A striking instance of the way in which the Lord

deals with His disciples is recorded in the beginning of the Acts.¹ After His Resurrection they ask Him the question : “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel ?” They are still expecting an outward victory in which the enemies of God shall be crushed ; and their expectation rests on the crude conception of God’s power as a kind of brute force. But Christ does not argue with them to show them that they are wrong. Their question is a foolish one, but He does not expose its fallacy. He merely brushes it aside : “It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has set in His own power.” He does not answer their question, but He bids them look forward and He gives them a promise : “Ye shall receive power (*λήψεσθε δύναμιν*), after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you ; and ye shall be my witnesses in Judæa, and unto the uttermost parts of the world.” He leaves the experience of the future to correct their foolish notions. When they have received the Spirit within them they will gradually learn, through that inward illumination, what is the true victory of Christ.

Moreover, that which is promised them is not mere illumination but power. And power was what they afterwards received at Pentecost. And when this power was given them, their outlook on life was changed. They who had looked forward to an outward triumph, now gloried only in their humiliation ; they who had expected that God would trample their foes beneath His feet, were now enabled, not to crush their foes, but to suffer persecution and hardship. They possessed the power to be witnesses

¹ Acts i. 6-8.

of Christ; and in this power they could not annihilate opposing force, but only endure it. Through this hidden power of God it was that some of them came away from the persecuting council "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for His Name's sake," and through it that the face of the first martyr Stephen became as the face of an angel. The strength of the Church has always lain in the power of love which counts it gain to suffer martyrdom for Christ; and this is the power of God.

It will be urged that the Lord worked miracles, and that so too did His Church. This matter will be discussed later on, and an attempt will be made to show that the miracles of Christ and of His disciples are not inconsistent with the conception of a power which is the opposite of force. Meanwhile, one thing is plain—that such is the conception of power which fits in with the Lord's actual teaching, and such the conception which explains the most universal and characteristic element of the Christian's deepest experience.

But it may be urged, again, that Christ actually taught a different conception when, in the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed that His cup of pain might be taken away. For in His prayer He said that all things are possible with God. To deal with this question we must first consider another passage.

In the ninth chapter of St. Mark we are told of a miracle performed on an epileptic boy. And the father of the child says to the Divine Healer: "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us."¹ His faith is weak and he does not know that he is speaking to One Who is infinite Goodness

¹ St. Mark ix. 22.

and Life. He does not know that infinite Love can evoke (by sympathy and not compulsion) the slumbering vital powers of the body, however feeble and diseased, even as it can evoke the vital spirit of the most diseased and feeble soul. And therefore he fears his boy may be beyond Christ's healing powers. But our Lord replies: "If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth."¹ And the words appear to mean that life enkindles answering life so long as there is no opposing influence. Where, through want of faith, the patient was unreceptive, there the Lord's power was of no avail; and hence He could in one place do no mighty works because of their unbelief. On the other hand, the patient who was receptive through the depth of his faith, having received into his being the vitalising rays, would feel within him an answering physical energy which would rise up to greet their advent.

And thus the Lord's reply to the distracted father confirms, instead of contradicting, the conception of omnipotence derived from the rest of His teaching. God is omnipotent, for all things are possible: wherever there is the faintest faculty of life there the infinite love of God, through its own inherent sympathy and attractiveness, is capable of winning a response. But yet it cannot work where there is no faith: mere sympathy (unlike mere brute force) is always unable to act unless there be an answering sympathy to meet it.

We may now turn to the narrative of the Agony in the Garden. There are three accounts; and these, while they agree in the main, yet differ vastly in detail.

¹ St. Mark ix. 23 (R.V.).

The Marcan account contains an inconsistency. "He prayed," we are told, "that, if it were possible, the cup might pass from him."¹ And yet the actual wording of the prayer is not "if it be possible," but "all things are possible to Thee." Let us then put St. Mark by for the moment and turn to the other two Synoptists. St. Luke says merely that He "prayed, saying: Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me."² St. Matthew says merely that "He fell on His face, and prayed, saying: O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."³ It will be seen that the former of these two versions is more in harmony with the popular notion of omnipotence, the latter with that conception which Christ consistently taught. Hence it is quite natural that if He actually used the second form of words it should be changed by the unconscious influence of a mistaken popular presupposition into the first. In a somewhat similar manner on another occasion, mistaken reverence changed the words: "Why callest thou me good?" into the more intelligible: "Why askest thou me concerning that which is good?"⁴

On the other hand, the converse change would not be at all likely to occur. Ordinary theological influences would never convert what looks like a clear statement of God's omnipotence into what looks like a statement that His power is limited. The solution then seems plain. Christ said: "If it be possible"; but the words appeared inconsistent with the omnipotence of God, and hence in course of transcription

¹ St. Mark xiv. 35, 36.

² St. Luke xxii. 42.

³ St. Matthew xxvi. 39.

⁴ St. Mark x. 18; St. Luke xviii. 19; St. Matthew xix. 17 (R.V.).

were modified, whether deliberately or unconsciously, into "If thou be willing."

Now, in St. Mark's account, as we possess it, we can see the process of change actually taking place; for we have two versions side by side, regardless of their mutual inconsistency.

Let us suppose that the account given by St. Mark originally ran, "He prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass from him. And He said: Abba Father, if it be possible, take this cup from me." A transcriber coming to this passage might very naturally be reminded, half unconsciously, of the Lord's reply to the father of the demoniac boy which he had lately been copying out in a previous chapter of the same Gospel. Hence on his coming to the words: "He prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass from him," there would, out of the subconscious workings of his memory, issue the reply: "If thou canst! All things are possible."¹ And hence, on coming to the words "if it be possible" in the next verse, he would naturally change them, whether consciously or not, into the words which we now possess: "All things are possible to Thee."

Thus the accounts we possess of our Lord's Agony in the Garden do not, even as they stand, with one voice contradict the conception of an omnipotence which consists in nothing but love, and therefore, just because it is omnipotent, is unable to do anything which could be accomplished by mere force. And when examined closely, they are seen to contain indications which corroborate, instead of contradicting, the conception.

¹ St. Mark ix. 23 (R.V.).

A greater difficulty, perhaps, is to be found in the words of the Lord to Peter at the betrayal : "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ?"¹ These words appear to rest on the conception of a power which can use coercion and win its ends by force. But let us look at them attentively. They speak of a power through which Christ could escape His foes. But this power is spoken of as resting in His human soul rather than in the ultimate Godhead. The thought is not so much "He can send me help," nor is this exactly what is said. It is rather "I can ask for it and, by asking, can obtain it." In other words, that which the Lord is conscious of here is simply His own miraculous power. And this question must be, for the present, reserved. Meanwhile, this much may be suggested : Our Lord wrought most of His miracles, perhaps, by virtue of the fact that He possessed a human body. And therefore it would follow, strange as it may seem, that the power directly to work them was, in truth, a part of the human limitations of His earthly life. If this be the case, then, although He knew that He could summon into being hidden forces to His aid, yet that does not imply that God's omnipotence consists in force. Coercive force is the driving power of the whole natural world, and yet, as will be later shown, the fact does not clash with a conception of omnipotence as consisting only in love.

But the Christian thinks not only of the words of Christ, but also, and even more, of His life. The spiritual life of God upon earth will show what is the

¹ St. Matthew xxvi. 53.

nature of God as He dwells in heaven. A conception derived from any alien source is bound to be misleading.

What, then, was the essential power of Christ? What was the power which distinguished Him from all the great ones of this earth? What was the secret of His peculiar influence? There is but one answer. It was love made perfect through suffering; it was love dying in weakness on the Cross. This was the essence of His sovereignty; and this was His peculiar triumph. It is a mistake to regard the Passion as a temporary defeat which was only reversed by the Resurrection. The Passion was itself the final victory won by the Son of God. Hence it is that the words "I have overcome the world"¹ are reported to have fallen from His lips, not after He had risen from the tomb, but as He was going to meet His death of agony and shame. The historical value of the Fourth Gospel does not affect the question of their significance. Even if they were not actually uttered by the Lord, yet they show what conception of His victory is to be found in the ripest product of Christian experience. They show at any rate that, to one who saw deepest into the mystery of that perfect Life, the victory of Christ consisted in His apparent defeat.

Moreover, it is in the same Gospel that the Lord is recorded to have said: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."² And the words are a gentle rebuke to Philip's desire for a special revelation of God's Being. "Philip saith unto him: Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not

¹ St. John xvi. 33.

² St. John xiv. 9.

known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, Show us the Father?" The words imply, and in fact most plainly state, that there is nothing in God's ultimate Being other than that which is to be found in Christ. And therefore the ultimate triumph of God in heaven must be identical with that of Christ on earth. The only triumph of God is that of being what He is. He triumphs, not through any force of compulsion, but solely through the immovable firmness of love which surrenders itself eternally, and in that self-surrender is conscious of its absolute glory.

No doubt there are utterances of Christ which appear to speak of a different triumph. The apocalyptic sayings appear to look forward to the annihilation of God's foes, and to paint the ultimate victory as an act of strong coercion. But this is popular teaching, and its imagery is necessarily metaphorical. It is impossible to convey spiritual truths without some kind of metaphor, and metaphors are never wholly true. The essential teaching of such language is that those who reject the Lord must, when they appear before Him, be in misery and woe; but this does not imply that God possesses a coercive force. Just because God's power consists in nothing but His goodness, therefore nothing that is evil can stand in His pure sight. And therefore the wicked, through the very fact of their own wickedness, must depart from before His face into the outer darkness. And to be by their own act cut off from Him Who is the only Fount of joy must be for them a source of misery worse than banishment or vengeance imposed by a despot's will. Such is the essential meaning of the passages;

and the details are the imagery by which it is expressed.

What Christ the Incarnate God did in time, that God the Heavenly Father does, and must do, for ever in eternity. If Christ was meek and lowly on earth, then God is meek and lowly in heaven. If Christ was dumb before His oppressors and resisted not the evil, then God in heaven cannot resist through all eternity, but must be dumb and silent. If Christ, before His earthly judge, could claim that because He was a Heavenly King therefore He could not use outward force, then such, and no other, must be the sovereign might by which God rules the world. God is love, and love alone : and this is the sum total of His power.

CHAPTER II

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD (*Continued*)

A CONCEPTION of omnipotence has so far been obtained which is the exact opposite of that which generally claims the title. On to this path we have been led by the instinct of the human heart and by the guidance of the Christian revelation. But lest our instinct should be at fault and should have caused us to misinterpret that guiding light which we have followed, it will be as well to pause and take our bearings with the aid of map and compass. Let us, then, examine the position by the methods of abstract thought.

It is customary to distinguish in the human mind between the faculties of reason, will and emotion ; and no doubt a distinction exists. At the same time, it is inaccurate to speak of three "faculties" as if each were a separate thing and could exist without the other. It is on all hands maintained by students that the so-called "faculties" cannot be actually separated from each other, or have an isolated existence. They are not like the bodily limbs, which may be amputated while the rest of the body remains. Instead of being separate entities, they are in actual truth but different sides of one indivisible fact. When I will to go to a certain place I must be thinking of the place or I could not will to go there. And there must be some kind of emotion in my act of will ; for either I like

going or I do not, and thus there is either a feeling of pleasure or else a feeling of repugnance. I cannot tear the feeling from my act of will, nor yet can I tear from it the element of thought. My whole mental state may be compared to a building, of which my act of will corresponds to the material, my act of thought to the shape, my feelings to the colour. And just as you cannot have a building which consists of bricks and yet has no shape or colour, so you cannot have a mental state which consists of a mere act of will without thought or feeling. In one building the most striking feature may be the quality of the material, which is, perhaps, unusually hard, or unusually strong, or proof against fire or cold, or possessed of some other characteristic; and in such a work there may be very little richness of colour, or very little complexity of shape. Yet some colour and some shape there must be; for mere material without colour or shape is impossible. Again, the most striking feature may be the colour or the shape; and in this case the material may be comparatively poor. The painted dome or sculptured pinnacle may be fashioned of a soft and porous stone which will not resist the hand of time. Still, however poor the material, yet some material there must be; for without it the shape and colour could not exist. The building is nothing but matter in a certain shape and with a certain colour. And the shape and colour are simply the shape and colour of the matter used.

Just so it is with the human mind. A man may have a strong will, as a building may be built of granite; and yet he may be wanting in feeling or in reflective power, as the granite building may be want-

ing in richness of hues or beauty of outline. And yet some feeling, of pleasure or repugnance, there must be in his actions, and also some intelligence, even as the granite building cannot be quite destitute of colour or of shape; for without some feeling and some intelligence he cannot exercise his will at all. Again, he may have strong emotions or a keen and penetrating intelligence, and yet be wanting in strength of will, as the building of good proportions or rich hues may be made of a poor material. Yet some kind of will he must have, be it only just enough to concentrate himself on some emotion or some train of thought. He has the emotions and the logical subtlety, perhaps, of a weak and wavering will, but without a will of some sort he would not be human at all.

Will, emotion and intellect are thus not separate entities, and none can exist by itself. Here one may predominate, and there another (from whence the infinite varieties of human character), but they are all merely different sides to one inseparable fact. And the higher we rise in the scale of human character, the more is this essential unity made plain. The great man is one who has a strong will, by which he sets himself to accomplish his task, a strong intellect, by which he understands the nature of that task and his reasons for undertaking it, and a strong emotion of satisfaction as the work grows beneath his hands. His will is his activity, his intellect is the intelligence of his activity, his emotion is the glorious sensation of his activity.

If this is so in greater or less degree, according to the measure of greatness possessed by the human character, it must, in complete and perfect measure, apply to the

Being of God. If God loves, then He exercises will ; for (as St. Thomas says) to love is but “to will towards somebody that which is good.” God therefore wills, and by this act of will He pours forth eternally infinite goodness. But in this act of boundless love He cannot but feel a boundless joy which is the very essence of the act itself. He could not pour forth love without feeling joy ; and He could not feel joy in anything else than in perfect love. Moreover, He must love not blindly, but with full knowledge of His action. He must know what is that goodness which He wills, and the object to which it is directed. And He must know and understand that He is pouring the stream of goodness forth. Thus with the perfect act of will and the perfect joy of exercising it, there is also perfect intelligence. And this intelligence is not separate from the will and the feeling. It is the will and it is the feeling itself. Just as only perfect love is perfect joy, so only perfect love is perfect knowledge and wisdom. On this earth we can see that the man who hates his brother man is not only miserable, in the truest sense, but is also ignorant ; for want of sympathy is the one great source of misunderstanding in human life. And therefore we can dimly see that, in God, to love is itself to rejoice, and is itself perfectly to know. And if to say that God has joy and knowledge is the same thing as to say that He loves, then it would seem natural that this, and nothing else, is what we should mean when we say that He has power.

But there is upon the map another path which leads still further, and, in fact, goes straight to the goal. It is to be sought in one of the oldest and the tritest commonplaces of philosophy.

In the natural world all things consist of parts. And these parts can be divided from one another and maintain a separate existence. I may pluck the fruit from a tree without removing the leaves ; or I may lop off one of the branches, and the rest will yet remain. The whole universe is a manifold in which each object is outside of all others.

But then, behind this manifold we are driven to think of a unity. There must be some ultimate principle binding the whole universe together. Behind the many there must be the One. And this One, to be truly one, cannot consist of parts. It cannot be divided or separated into things which differ. If it could, it would then be no longer the One, and we should be driven to seek for the true unity beyond it.

But the ultimate Principle of unity is precisely that which we call God. Hence it follows that, if God is the ultimate Being Who sustains the world, there cannot be in Him any distinction of attributes. We cannot distinguish His attributes from Himself nor yet from one another. And therefore, since God is Love, it follows that His wisdom, His eternity, His beatitude, His greatness, and, finally, His power are all nothing less than that Love which is Himself.

It would, of course, be equally true to explain His love as consisting in power or in wisdom or in beatitude or greatness. Only love is truly mighty ; only love is truly wise ; only love is happy or is great.

“By love subsists
All lasting grandeur, by pervading love ;
That gone, we are as dust.”¹

¹ Wordsworth, *Prelude*, xiv. 168–9.

But love is mighty, not with the power of brute force ; it is wise, not with earthly wisdom ; it is happy and is great, not with earthly exultation or display. And because love is the highest thing upon earth, therefore it is best to take this quality rather than any other and to identify the rest with it. Our normal conceptions of wisdom, justice and power are of the earth, and cannot be applied to God until they are spiritualised and their earthly meaning wholly reversed. Christian love comes straight from heaven and is spiritual already.

The moment, then, that we try to form a philosophic conception of God's nature, we are compelled to regard Him as a complete and indivisible Unity. And the moment we do this we are driven at once to abandon the entire notion of a Being possessing various attributes in favour of the position that all the so-called attributes are but various names of one and the same fact. And in harmony with this truth it is that St. Bernard speaks of God as "not composed of elements, but entirely simple in nature," as "possessing in Himself nothing except Himself," as a Being "Who cannot become a subject in which attributes inhere," and, in short, as having such a nature that, "while many qualities are said to reside in Him, all those qualities are one."

But St. Bernard was no isolated thinker giving expression to a thought which is not discovered in other fathers of the Church. It will probably be found that in all philosophic theologians the same language occurs. For the present purpose it will suffice to offer illustrations from the two greatest orthodox thinkers of the Western Church.

There will be no difficulty in taking passages, quite at random, from St. Augustine. "In God," he says, "all attributes are the same. For we must not say that in God power is one thing, and providence another thing, and courage another, and justice another, or purity another."¹ In this passage God's power is identified with all His other so-called attributes. And though there is no actual mention of the attribute of love, yet the identification with it of the Divine power must, of course, be implied or the whole argument falls to the ground. At the same time, there is an actual mention of God's purity; and it will be seen that an omnipotence consisting in nothing but purity and spotless innocence is a very different thing from an omnipotence of mere force.

Again, St. Augustine says: "God Himself is wisdom. And this is life, and is also virtue or power, and is also beauty, whereby He is called powerful or good. For what is more powerful and beautiful than wisdom? Furthermore, is there any difference between the goodness and the justice of God? Certainly not. His justice is His goodness, and His goodness is His happiness."² Here God's power is identified with His beauty. But the power possessed by beauty is the exact opposite of the force which a steam hammer can exercise on a bar of iron or the potter's hand on a lump of clay. It is a power which cannot drive and crush those who will not obey it, but is one that can only win us by its silent appeal to our sympathies. It is a power that waits for us to discover its hidden secret and moves us solely by being what it is. It does not resist the desecrations of its

¹ Sermon, v. 1951 D.

² *De Trin.* xiv. 7.

foes, nor, indeed, can it resist them. And it cannot resist the evil precisely because it is a spiritual power and is not of this gross world. Even so has many a fair spot, adorned by Nature with her priceless treasures, been marred by the ruthless hand of impious man, or only saved from such hideous desecration by the reverent care of those whose hearts could feel the mute appeal of tranquil loveliness. Even so have glorious works of art borne unresisting the ravages of time, or the disfigurement of unworthy generations, until some kindred soul has arisen who had felt their hidden power and could teach his fellow-men to love and cherish that which they had hitherto despised.

Again St. Augustine says: "It is not one thing for God to be great and another thing for Him to be God."¹ From this once more the same result is inevitable. For God is Love. And therefore it is not one thing for Him to be great and another for Him to be Love. But greatness is equivalent to power. From this it follows that God's omnipotence consists in nothing else than love: and it follows directly apart from the general logical implications of the passage.

Once more: "His greatness is the same thing as His wisdom . . . His goodness is the same thing as His greatness and wisdom."² Here again, if goodness and greatness are the same, it follows (since goodness is love and greatness is power) that God's power consists in love.

But this result does not depend on any special applications or implications of any particular passage.

¹ *De Trin.* vii. 1.

² *Ib.* vi. 8.

It flows necessarily from the general principles underlying the argument taken as a whole. There is, according to St. Augustine, no distinction of attributes in God. The so-called attributes are in truth identical with that Being which is Himself, and are only distinguished from it through the limitations of human thought and language. But things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another. Hence, if all the attributes of God are identical with His Being, they are all identical with one another and are all precisely the same thing. God's love is the only true wisdom, greatness and power; it is itself incorruptible beauty and eternal joy; and conversely, all these things are to be summed up in one word and one alone, and that one word is Love.

Moreover, in one of the passages quoted above, St. Augustine says (as was seen) that God's power is the same thing as His wisdom, and again, in another, that His goodness is the same thing as His wisdom. Put the two quotations together and the result is quite inevitable—

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Power} &= \text{Wisdom} \\ \text{Goodness} &= \text{Wisdom} \\ \therefore \text{Power} &= \text{Goodness} \end{aligned}$$

Thus the conclusion implied, though almost unconsciously implied, by the language of St. Augustine is, once more, simply this: That God is omnipotent solely in the fact that He is good.

One more quotation will suffice. At the end of the *De Trinitate*¹ St. Augustine deals with the so-

¹ Bk. xv. 8, 9.

called attributes of God. He gives twelve attributes and divides them into three groups containing four each. They are as follows :—

Eternal	Living	Just
Immortal	Wise	Good
Incorruptible	Powerful	Happy
Immutable	Beautiful	Spiritual

Now, in each of these groups, he selects the first attribute as a representative name for all the rest in the group. Thus the immutability, incorruptibility and immortality of God are all identical with His eternity; His beauty, power and wisdom are identical with His life; His spirituality, happiness and goodness are identical with His justice. But Augustine does not stop here. He goes on to say that eternity, life and justice are in God also one and the same thing. From this it plainly follows (since power = life, and life = justice, and justice = goodness) that the power of God *is* His goodness and is nothing else.

Such, then, is the truth to which Augustine was driven by the methods of philosophy. The astonishing thing is that, having just beneath his hands this magic golden key, he sometimes made so little use of it. This key alone will fit all the locks which fasten the doors of every theological problem, and yet Augustine, having had it thrust into his hand by sheer philosophical necessity, too often wasted all his genius through grappling with a clumsy iron implement of earthly manufacture. In St. Augustine's character there meet two different personalities. There is, on the one hand, the philosopher, the mystic and

the saint, who soars beyond all human vision and plunges deep into the abyss of Divine mystery : on the other hand, there is in him the harsh controversialist, apparently without imagination and certainly without a sense of humour. On the one hand, we have the "Confessions" and the Commentary on St. John ; on the other hand, his theories of reprobation and of the fate of unbaptized infants. It may be doubted whether these two conflicting sides of his character were ever brought into harmony : and the discrepancy is in a great measure due to a very simple fact. As philosopher, mystic and saint, he spoke from his own deep experience ; and this experience implied, as its pure source, a God Whose omnipotence and Whose knowledge consisted solely in love. But as a controversialist he spoke not wholly from his own experience, but rather as the champion of a system which he accepted from tradition ; and as part of this theological tradition he, like all men both orthodox and heretical, had been taught to accept a conception of a God whose power consisted in force and whose knowledge could foresee all things that would happen. This was the rusty key with which he tried to force the lock of Predestination and Providence. But the doors remained fast shut for all his ingenuity.

Or he may be compared to a builder who has been able to test some part of his foundations and knows that they are firm, or who has himself laid them with the solid rock hewn by his own right hand, but for the other part of them accepts the testimony of tradition as to their soundness and does not think it necessary to examine them himself ; and therefore

he accepts in all good faith, as firm and sure, that which is but sand. Remove this vain foundation of an omnipotence consisting in force ; and all the cunning superstructure of sophistries on Predestination and Providence—a superstructure already gaping wide from the rest of the theological edifice—crumbles and falls to dust, while all that makes Augustine one of the greatest of all Christian thinkers, and one of the profoundest saints the world has ever seen, will remain firmly built on its own indestructible foundation, even the mystic's experience of a God Who has no power but the bare fact of His goodness.

It is possible that, even in the passages quoted just above, there is to be seen the strange and pitiful prejudice which hampered that profound and noble mind. For though the thought leads straight to the spiritual conception of omnipotence, yet Augustine seems to shrink from directly expressing the truth in so many words. He without hesitation identifies God's power with His wisdom ; for even in this life knowledge may be the path to what the world counts power. On the other hand, he does not actually, and in so many words, identify God's power with His goodness ; and perhaps this strange omission is not without significance. Is it fanciful to suppose that here we see this great mind's earthly limitations ? The omission was due, perhaps, to the barbarous notion by which the saint was hampered. In this life the cause of goodness appears to be generally the weaker cause, as from the earthly point of view it is ; and Augustine was not free from the expectation that goodness would one day achieve a

conquest consisting in something other than this apparent defeat.

A precisely similar process is seen in the writings of St. Thomas. Here we find a similar train of thought, with, however, the same limitations due to the same unconscious cause. It will be well to take the leading passages from the *Summa* dealing with the subject.

"God," he says, "is His Own Deity, His Own Life, and whatever is in this way predicated of Him."¹ From this it must follow that God is His Own power. And since God is Love, it follows that the Divine power consists in love.

Again : "When we say that Deity or life or anything of this kind belongs to God, we must explain such language by the diversity of manner in which our intellect receives the truth and not by any diversity of fact."² From this it would follow that, if we speak of God's power and of His love, it is not because His power is anything else than His love, but only because our minds cannot easily realise the truth of a power which consists in love and of a love which is mighty solely by being itself.

Again : "When we attribute power to God, the distinction between His power and His knowledge and will is not an actual one, but solely a logical one. . . . Perhaps we should say that the Divine knowledge or will itself, inasmuch as it is an originating activity, has the nature of power."³ God's power, then, is equivalent to His will. But it is St. Thomas himself who elsewhere defines love as "willing that which is good to somebody." Love, then, is a good will. And,

¹ i, Q. 3, Art. 3.

² Ib.

³ i, Q. 25, Art. 1.

since God's will is always good, it follows that His love is identical with His will. Hence we get the following equation—

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Love} &= \text{Will} \\ \text{Power} &= \text{Will} \\ \therefore \text{Power} &= \text{Love} \end{aligned}$$

Again : "Since the power of God, which is His essence, is not something different from the wisdom of God, it can be rightly said that there is nothing in the power of God which is not in the order of Divine wisdom. For the Divine wisdom embraces all the potentiality of His power."¹ From this quotation we get the same result. God's power, says St. Thomas, is His essence. But then God's essence is love, for God is Love. Hence His power is only His love. Moreover, St. Thomas says that there is nothing in His power which is not in His wisdom. He *cannot*, then, do anything but what His wisdom sees to be best. This contains implications which will be dealt with presently.

Once more : "In God power, and essence, and will, and intellect, and wisdom, and justice, are all identical."² This statement, after what has been already said, needs no comment.

Taking these quotations as a whole, we gain from them exactly the same position that we obtained from St. Augustine. There is no distinction in God's ultimate Nature between Being and Attributes; nor is one attribute to be distinguished from another. If we make a distinction, it is purely a logical one, and has no foundation in actual reality. The human mind

¹ i, Q. 25, Art. 5.

² Ib.

with its logical powers breaks up the Divine perfection into prismatic rays; but in God they exist, not as separate rays, but as one "simple light."¹ And what spiritual light can our hearts ever consent to recognise except the light of Love?

And we see in St. Thomas also precisely the same strange, unconscious limitation that was at work in St. Augustine. He expressly identifies God's power with His wisdom and knowledge; for earthly knowledge is the source of earthly power. And he expressly identifies it with His will; for a strong will is again a source of earthly power. Nevertheless, though he actually elsewhere gives "goodwill" as the definition of love, yet he does not in so many words say that love is the sum total of God's power. This conclusion is absolutely inevitable, and he says it in all but actual fact. Why did he not in the plainest and most emphatic terms make the statement and build upon it the whole of his edifice? Probably because he, sublime and massive intellect though he was, and marvellously illumined by the Spirit of God, yet was restrained and hampered by that earthly notion of an omnipotence consisting in force which has been the very bane and curse of all theology.

The immense importance of the matter is clear as soon as we turn to its practical applications. It is a sober statement of a patent fact to say that the false conception of omnipotence has alienated from the Christian Faith some of the acutest and some of the noblest intellects that have struggled in the sacred cause of Truth, and has put enormous difficulties in the way of many a Christian soul. As the mind of man, drawn

¹ Dante, *Paradiso*, xxxiii. 90.

on by kindred desire, tries to reach its own true native home, it finds before it countless facts which block the path of religious belief, and form an impassable barrier. Well may it retreat appalled and refuse to continue its pilgrimage. Well may it say that the task is vain, and relinquish the rash attempt. And then, perchance, it will waste its days in drawing ground-plans and elevations of this forbidding wall to prove to other wayfarers the hopelessness of the journey.

The ordinary conception of omnipotence raises the whole stupendous problem of God's dealings with the world. And this problem may be divided mainly into the two complementary questions of Revelation and Providence.

If the question of Revelation be looked at in its broadest outline, many perplexing facts are disclosed. The whole process is tortuous and round-about in the extreme, the course of development marvellously strange. All religion in its first origin is mingled with much that is base, springing often from craven fear and beginning in devil-worship and magic; and it is only out of these lower elements that the higher religious consciousness can finally struggle into being. Such are the astounding methods by which God has in every age, and in every clime, been leading the human race.

Now there are two attitudes possible, and two only, towards this strange and startling fact. On the one hand, we can regard God as possessing an omnipotence of force. And if we adopt this theory then we must simply say that His workings are inscrutable. On the other hand, we can regard God as possessing an omnipotence of nothing but love and goodness. And

if we accept this view the matter all becomes plain. We are then no longer driven to suppose that, for reasons unknown to us, He handed over to the powers of darkness the task of inspiring the human race with its rudiments of religion, and only later on, by a tortuous and not wholly successful process, began to spiritualise and turn to good account these gross and diabolical conceptions. Instead of this we can see how, strong in the strength of infinite goodness, He could do nothing but wait and endure the accursed thing and thus gradually and patiently, by that astounding omnipotence which consists in sheer truth and goodness itself, could transmute those base beginnings into something pure and holy.

The truth, in fact, is mighty solely because it is true. And truth is goodness, and goodness is love. And hence love is the whole of God's power.

The question of God's Revelation is full of absorbing interest. But there is another question, more pressing, more absorbing, more agonising still. It is one that weighs often on the mind of man with a crushing and a weary weight. It springs from certain ghastly facts which have often driven mankind to despair. It is the whole question involved in the notion of God's providence.

The ordinary religious attitude towards the world is briefly this : God rules all things that He has made and orders them as He sees fit. When trouble comes through accident or disease, it comes from His mighty hand ; or, if not direct from the hand of God, at least it occurs with His permission. He could prevent it all if He liked, but in wisdom He refrains. Similarly, when the wicked prosper and cruelty and

injustice prevail, God could intervene with His avenging wrath, but His power is held in check by His patience. It may seem to us that the whole system of things is most scandalously mismanaged ; we may feel that we would not willingly have upon our conscience the creation of such a world as this : but that is only the ignorance of our poor and puny minds. If God's ways perplex us, it is only because in His patience and His wisdom He sees with other eyes than ours.

On this incongruous raft many troubled souls find an uneasy support amid the storms of life. And part of the raft is sound, but part is altogether rotten ; nor will the structure be perfectly safe until the unsound planks are removed. The whole theory is, in fact, inconsistent with itself and will not hold together.

We are told that God can do certain things, but does not do so for good reasons beyond our ken, and that in restraining His hand He is showing His patience and His wisdom. Wisdom is a virtue, and God shows His wisdom in allowing the earthquake or the tempest : patience is a virtue, and He shows His patience in enduring the contradiction of sinners. So far so good. But a startling conclusion follows. For if God did not permit these things He would be showing less wisdom and less patience : in a word, He would be showing less virtue. But anything falling short of perfect virtue, being imperfect, is to that extent wrong. Thus, if God were to intervene and prevent the ills and sufferings of the world, He would be doing wrong. But God *cannot* do wrong. On this point all Christians are agreed. Therefore it follows that He *cannot* prevent the tempest or the injustice.

But, it will be urged, this is a moral impossibility

and nothing more. Physically God can do these things, though morally He cannot. To which the answer is simple. For the impossibility is also a moral one if His power consists in love. Such a power, consisting as it does in a wholly moral quality, is nothing but a moral power. What love can do it has no ability to do except a moral ability, and what love cannot do it is morally unable to do. Love morally can do this and morally cannot do that, and it is inaccurate to say that love either can or cannot physically do anything in the world, simply because the word "physical" does not apply to it at all. At the same time, of course, if the word "physical" be applied to it (as it should not) it is truer to say that love cannot physically do certain things than to say that it can.

I may say that a colour is green or I may say that it is not. But to ask whether a taste or a sound is green is a foolish question and has no meaning. Yet if such a question be asked I can only answer: "No." Even so, I may say that I physically can or cannot stop an accident. But if the question be asked: "Is the omnipotence of God physically able to do so?" the question is a foolish one and meaningless. Yet if such a question be asked, I must here again reply with a most emphatic: "No." And this is because sheer, perfect love does not belong to the physical sphere at all.

Such physical power could belong to Christ only when He lived on earth by means of a material body. It cannot belong to Him if He, in St. Augustine's words, has "passed from time into eternity" and has risen beyond all physical limitations into the completely indivisible unity of pure, spiritual Being.

The ordinary notion of Providence is thus inconsistent with itself. The raft is an incongruous thing and threatens to fall in pieces. Get rid of the rotten planks, and the rest will remain firm and secure and will stand the strain of every tempest and bring mankind to the harbour. Instead of a physical power consisting of force, which is restrained by a moral inability, we shall be left with a moral power which consists of sheer love, and hence, through the very might of its omnipotence, is unable to act in any other way than by the mere fact of its moral goodness.

Thus we are saved from the degradation of thanking God for facts which our hearts condemn. Thus we are not passive slaves with mind and conscience fettered ; but possess instead a glorious and terrible liberty of untrammelled thought and action. The true Christian spirit is no spirit of acquiescence in things as they are : rather it is one of passionate, though patient, revolt. And, while it enables us to see that all things work together for good to those who love God, yet it also compels us to acknowledge that the universe does not in all its details express His holy will. All things, in fact, to some extent run counter to His will, inasmuch as nothing is perfect. And this fact is recognised in practice, if not in theory, by every Christian who tries by the help of God to do something for the amelioration of the world's misery. Otherwise the only alternative is fatalism, which doctrine is, in fact, most predominant in those lands where the Mohammedan creed with its crude conception of despotic power has made effort, to a great extent, impossible and impious by regarding all things as due to the will of God.

And yet He Who is the Truth has commanded His disciples at all times to trust in the providence of a Heavenly Father: and He is reported to have said: "If ye shall ask anything in My Name I will do it."¹ Does not such teaching seem to imply that God can actually over-ride the course of this world's laws and by the fiat of His will avert calamity or send material blessings? Such may be the meaning which the words seem to bear on the surface, but their true significance belongs to a profounder region. Prayer may, undoubtedly, working by unknown laws, unlock the floodgates and enable God to produce material results which He could not otherwise achieve; but the real meaning of the promise is a far more marvellous secret. It is something that has been hidden from the wise ones of this world; but it has been revealed to all the children of God. All who have put their trust in God's unchanging providence unite in proclaiming that they have, though it may be after many a bitter struggle, found the words to be entirely true; for in having learnt something of the secret of heavenly things they have found a peace that passeth understanding and a joy that no man taketh away. They have not been without this earth's troubles; but the sense of God's love has taken all bitterness from their lot and transformed their very sorrow into an intenser form of joy. They have reached the ultimate Fact which can alone give any meaning to life, and, in possessing God, they have felt that they possessed all things. Thus they have known by experience that they were each moment embraced by the arms of a loving Providence;

¹ St. John xiv. 14.

for they have felt that, whatever tribulation the inscrutable forces of evil might bring upon them, they were still the possessors of that happiness which all men desire and for the sake of which alone they pursue the pleasures and shun the afflictions of this world.

Theirs has been the true happiness which consists in the transfiguration of sorrow rather than in its abolition. For the deepest joy is not to be found in the mere immunity from pain ; nay, it has often happened that the pure fount of this spiritual joy has itself been the source of fresh possibilities of agony. For the love of God has deepened the human affections, and man's inmost being, thus rendered more sensitive, has been pierced by the suffering or the wrong-doing of his brother man. Nevertheless that deepened love which, by making the soul more capable of pain, has caused the bitterness of the torture has also been the source of healing. For, as it has been most truly said—

“There is a comfort in the strength of love ;
‘Twill make a thing endurable which else
Would overset the brain or break the heart.”

And so it is that many a human being, when crushed and broken by another's tragedy, has all the time been sustained by the very strength of love which has caused a passionate conviction that beneath the sufferings or the sins of that apparently ruined life there lay something of imperishable value for the sake of which it was worth while that the anguish or the degradation should be borne.

So it has been with God's children ; and so, we may believe, it is with God Himself. The agony which is daily being suffered in this world is so

immense that it may well be wondered how a God of love can endure the sight. The answer is that it is only because God is Love that He can endure it. God, because He loves each human soul, can (we may believe) see in it possibilities for the sake of which even the sufferings and sins of this life may be endured and even, finally, made the means to a completer triumph. God is infinite Love, and for this reason alone He can bear the burden of immeasurable suffering; and therefore the heart of man may anchor itself upon the conviction that, though God feels all the evil in the world with an anguish which the human mind will never fathom, He is yet for ever in the bliss unutterable which perfect Love must bring.

And in learning something of this mystery, the mind will dimly begin to apprehend the existence in the Godhead of an unfathomable strength and power. Here is unconquerable might; here is an absolute omnipotence. Here is a boundless ocean of life which can never be exhausted. And such an ocean there must be or all thought and life are vain. Every attempt to make the problem of evil one degree less insoluble by whittling away the omnipotence of God with the notion of self-limitation is necessarily doomed to failure. No such expedients can ever satisfy the intellect or the heart. Without in any way solving the problem, they merely wrap it up in an envelope of further difficulties. God must be infinite or He can be no object of worship to the infinite heart of man. God must be infinite or else He cannot satisfy man's unlimited thirst for truth. So then the great dilemma must be boldly accepted by each human soul that would strive to enter into the deeper mysteries

of life. And the solution will come when the Christian feels himself brought into the presence of an almighty and unconquerable Being Whose power solely consists in the burning intensity of eternal and infinite love.

CHAPTER III

CHANCE AND DESIGN

BEFORE the eyes of man is spread a mighty volume : that volume is the universe. Man turns the pages and tries to read its message. He is but ill-instructed and finds the task by no means an easy one ; but an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, deep within his being, impels him again and again to open the tantalising leaves, and with great pains and labour to try if perchance he can discover their hidden secret. And his industry is rewarded. Little by little he spells out individual words, and begins to fit them together ; and then by the help of the context he is able, through happy conjecture, to guess at the meaning of others, which at first were quite beyond him. By slow degrees he at last makes out whole sentences ; these give him points of light scattered over the obscure page ; by their aid he seeks to fill in the intervening spaces ; and thus he gradually begins to gain some inkling of the book's mysterious message.

He is driven to his task at first by a mere natural instinct ; but, as he proceeds, there is at work within him another impulse of a higher kind, which gives the labour he has undertaken a feverish and a painful interest.

This book he has been taught to regard as the work of a heavenly Author ; and as such he accepted

it in his earliest days. It is illustrated with most lovely pictures, in the marvellous beauty of which he has, from his infancy, rejoiced and seen in them the work of some celestial artist. Other drawings there are, it is true, which do not please him ; but he has been taught to believe that these were once as lovely as the rest before they were spoilt by some evil being who tried to destroy the artist's work. Or else he has been told that these illustrations, though they do not now please his childish fancy, are really beautiful things which he will begin to appreciate when he grows a little older : just now he cares for nothing but bright and cheerful colours ; but one day, perhaps in the life beyond the grave, he will learn to see that some of the very finest paintings are those which have a sombre tinge and repel the untrained eye. Or else the child is told that the pictures are unfinished, and that, when at last the heavenly artist has completed them, the shades will fall into their proper place and will only serve to intensify the bright colours of the whole design.

So the child is taught, and so he is content to believe. He looks with delight on those pictures which appeal to him ; the rest he can pass by for the present, turning away by his natural childish instinct from all that is repulsive. If he happens to open the book at one of the ugly drawings, he feels puzzled for a moment ; but he does not dwell upon it. He hastily turns the pages until he finds something more to his taste, looking at what he can appreciate and admire, and leaving the rest on one side.

Then, as he begins to grow and painfully learns to read, he wants not only to admire the illustrations, but

also to understand them. No longer satisfied to look upon the common sights of earth and sky with a child's artless and unquestioning gaze, he seeks to grasp with his intellect the hidden causes of things ; and so he begins with much pains and trouble to spell out the written page. He has no expectations of being able to read the whole book through from cover to cover ; for he knows that there are many long and abstruse words too hard for him ever to understand ; but if he can pick out, here and there, enough to show him the general drift of the whole great theme, that will be an ample reward of all his labour. And in course of time he may even be able to guess at some of the more difficult words and to see something of the meaning which lies hidden in the most involved and perplexing sentences.

So he begins to read a little. And what he reads is marvellous beyond all human imagining ; it is poetry such as no mind of man has ever yet been able to conceive. Thus much he can realise from the few lines which he is able to follow ; and the more he tries to read and re-read, and the more lines he succeeds in piecing together into connected passages, the more is he filled with a sense of the mysterious glory which pervades the mighty theme. Some people, it is true, tell him that this is all his foolish fancy : the thing, they say, is not poetry at all, but is the baldest prose. To such counsellors he pays no heed. They are mere grammarians and, being absorbed in the grammatical structure, have no eyes for anything else. They think that the grammar is everything, and, therefore, while they can explain the syntax of whole sentences, they fail to understand their vital inner meaning.

The man, then, who feels the poetry of the great theme still knows it to be poetry, though many grammarians assure him it is prose. To such he is grateful for what they have to give. They have helped him, and still help him, to understand the constructions ; and often they explain for him the exact meaning of a difficult word. He accepts and uses their services and admires their invaluable labours. Nevertheless he knows that, though the language of the book over which he pores conforms to rules of grammar which he must learn if he would read it, yet it is not mere dead syntax, but enshrines the most marvellous poetry. This fact no mere grammarian can ever feel and appreciate ; but he who has within his heart a kindred power of sympathy is thrilled by it and knows that it is the living message of the work.

So far so good. Much of the mighty volume is unspeakably sublime, and he can on every page see something of the marvellous theme which is developing through the whole great epic. The passages which he can interpret, and which, with their deep beauty, thrill his inmost being, are not mere disconnected fragments, but all cohere together as parts of one great whole, and, by that mutual harmony of purpose in which they all partake, each helps the movement of the one great action which runs throughout the work. Thus by their aid he can realise at least the outline of the splendid story, as with growing power there speaks in each the spirit of the same celestial song.

But it is not all so clear : difficulties there are which he cannot solve. Intermingled with the noblest flights are other elements of a different kind, whole

sentences which appear to have no bearing on the plot. He cannot make them out, and give them any satisfactory meaning. So far as he can see, the entire work would be much better without them. It is not that the words are difficult or that the constructions are obscure. The language is quite simple and he can understand it perfectly. And that is just where the trouble lies. For the obvious meaning of the sentences is the silliest nonsense, which would do well enough in a book of inferior jokes, but is quite out of place in the midst of a gorgeous epic. These passages are altogether perplexing. They are incongruous episodes which merely interrupt the movement of the whole piece and serve no apparent use at all. They look uncommonly like the ravings of sheer lunacy.

Nor is this the end of the difficulty. For there are yet other passages which are not merely silly, but seem to have only too much purpose of a very evil kind—sentences of blasphemy and hate which occur on every page and cannot be explained away. And these sentences appear to throw a lurid light on those grim and terrible pictures which had so repelled his childish fancy. They seem to be a full and ample commentary upon them, pointing out all the hideous detail with fearful insistence. The pictures, then, were not merely good pictures which had somehow been spoilt by another hand than that of the artist, unless the same hand had also tampered with the letterpress and interpolated whole passages into the midst of the poem to mar its beauty. At any rate, whatever the explanation may be, a large part of the book, writing and illustrations alike, is utterly vile and loathsome. It is full of malice, and rage, and hate, and envy, and

strife ; and however it got there, one thing is certain : it cannot possibly be the work of a heavenly author. Nobody with a pure and generous mind could ever have written some of the passages exactly as they stand.

This volume, then, is a strange mixture. Some of it certainly is the work of a great poet and sublime artist, whose thoughts outsoar the most marvellous of all human creations ; some of it, just as certainly, seems to be the work of a being half idiot and half brutal fiend, from whose thoughts the mind of man recoils with bewilderment, disgust and something like despair.

And the strange thing is that these passages cannot, as was hoped at first, be regarded as mere interpolations. The two elements are so inextricably mingled that you cannot cut out one and leave the rest. The book would be much improved if this were possible ; so at least one would think : but the thing cannot be done. Words of blasphemy and shame sometimes occur in the midst of the sublimest passages, and sometimes there are flashes of the purest poetry in the midst of the basest matter. Most strange of all, it often happens that whole lines of bitterest and most envenomed poison, when read together, possess a certain musical rhythm which entrances the astonished mind with a sweet and holy rapture. A page may be filled with vilest oaths and utterances of ribaldry and hate which shock the moral sense ; and yet even these bad words fit somehow into that celestial metre, even out of these base elements some marvellous artistic skill has produced that haunting cadence of ineffable melody which runs with soothing and ennobling power throughout the whole majestic poem.

The volume, then, is an enigma. We cannot cut out any parts and say that they are interpolations. We are instead obliged to accept it as one mighty whole. But, if this is so, then what can we deduce as to the character of the author? True, He can draw the most entrancing music out of those blasphemies and hideous curses; but that does not change the fact that the words themselves are abominable. And what are we to think of one who can employ such language? Is it possible to reverence him as a Being wholly good? Must we not regard him rather as a most erratic genius whose very ravings, through a mysterious inspiration, suggest something grand and noble quite different from that which they actually express? The thing is strange, unaccountable, perplexing.

Such, then, is this world—a riddle which we try to solve, but all in vain. The happiness and beauty in it pleased us in our childhood; the pain and sorrow puzzled us. But, with the natural instinct of children, we turned from all unpleasant things and looked only at the brighter side of life. If we ever had misgivings at the sight of grief and wrong, we were content to think that one day we should understand these things and be no more troubled by their presence. And so time passed, and childhood's dreams gave place to the more earnest vision of maturer years. We wished now to understand something of this vast system into which we had been born. The world, we had been taught, was the work of a loving God. If so, then the more we tried to understand its nature, the more certain proof we should obtain to strengthen our faith in that unseen Protector towards Whom with tottering gait and feeble hands we were groping our way.

We looked at the facts, so far as our small knowledge enabled us ; and dimly we could see a marvellous purpose running through the whole great work. The world was being revealed to our wondering gaze as a mighty spiritual system instinct with life and glory. It did not trouble us that certain scientific students, who were teaching mankind the grammar of that marvellous epic, could not appreciate its poetry. We were glad to learn what little grammar we could pick up from the store of their special knowledge ; we were grateful for the scientific facts and theories which they had put into our hands ; we could take what they had to give, and by its aid we could learn to realise more intensely the nature of that treasure which was ours. We had felt with passionate emotion the grandeur of the world, we had entered into spiritual sympathy with the mysterious heart of Nature. This holy secret had touched our being's core and stirred deep within our soul. We had felt it, we had looked upon its face, and we knew by intuitive conviction that behind all outward shows the universe veiled some ineffable Divinity which was akin to the best that throbbed within ourselves. And the facts revealed by natural science served but to intensify this deep and holy passion, served but to make articulate that dumb conviction within us, served but to heighten our perception of the mystery which is in all things. They gave us the terms in which to express, as no mere instinct of unreasoning faith but as the clear conviction of the intellect, our belief in the spiritual meaning of the world ; they made all things yet more mysterious, more unutterably wonderful, than before ; they revealed that which spoke in clearest accents not only to

the heart but also to the mind, and which, by talking thus an intelligible language, increased and strongly confirmed the heart's deep instinct of reverence. The whole world was seen to be informed with mysterious vital spirit, to be saturated throughout with Mind, with Intelligence, with Life.

Such was one side of our experience as we tried to pick up some of the crumbs from under the scientific table. But then there was another side, and here was our perplexity. While evolution helped us to trace an intelligent design running through the mighty scheme of things, it also brought to light some other facts not so easily explained. A great deal of the process appeared to have no plan at all; but looked like mere blind chance. On every hand lines of development were started which led to no result; and behind the ordered plan was a background of indescribable confusion. Even where the design was most apparent, this element of chance had borne a considerable part; for there was a haphazard tendency of variability in all things, and this, working through the mechanical law of the survival of the fittest, could explain a vast quantity of the facts. Instead of having from the first moved definitely towards that formation which they finally took upon them, the natural forces appear to have at first run aimlessly about in different directions, and, only after long and fruitless eddyings, to have at last begun to settle down into a certain definite channel, through which the world by purest accident stumbled into being.

The letters forming the great system certainly spelt a wonderful message, but when we considered the method by which they were put into their places,

we found it difficult to believe that they were all arranged by somebody who knew what he was doing. Sometimes we could not help wondering whether they had perhaps, after all, simply been shuffled about by a sort of supernatural ape until they happened at last, after countless ages, to fall into positions which would bear a meaning. Of course the message was there, however it had come to be formed. It touched our hearts and witnessed to us of eternal things. Of this there could be no doubt. The ultimate truth, which our spirits can recognise and to which they must give their homage, is true whatever the method by which it came to be expressed : it cannot possibly be an illusion. Order, harmony, beauty, by whatever accident they may have been obtained, are order, harmony and beauty still ; nor can they lose their nature and essence. They remain, and ever must remain, refractions from some heavenly light towards which our spirits, by natural kinship, turn. Nevertheless it is disconcerting at first to find so much blind chance apparently mingled with the main purpose of the world.

Each tiny target is riddled with holes. We had been taught to believe that these were the work of a heavenly marksman who shot his bullet straight to the spot with unerring directness of aim. Science has in large measure upset this comfortable assurance, and has shown us that the holes were not due to any special design, and were not caused by bullets each directed to its own particular mark. Instead of one skilful marksman with well-directed rifle, there has been a whole company of artillery conducting for many months and years a ceaseless cannonade of grape-shot. It is true the little targets have been all hit, but that

is more or less an accident. With such ceaseless and indiscriminate firing they could not very well escape. But the amount of shot which has reached its mark is as nothing compared with the enormous quantity which has fallen to the ground on each side, and beyond, without achieving any result. Amid the ceaseless flux of countless ages forms of harmony and order could not but appear; but there was, in the beginning at least, no definite design to produce them. The stream of changing forces poured on without intermission, and was lost in the wild confusion to which it rushed; but here and there it chanced to strike upon some principle of harmony and, striking, left its mark: and thus it was that all the order in the universe at first came into being.

Warfare, in fact, as Heraclitus saw of old, is the father of all things; and the mind, as it moves backward towards the first beginning of the world-process, is driven towards a formless raging sea of blind confusion and strife. From no other source than this were drawn by the sweet influence of heaven those vapours which, distilled in dew and rain, have formed the streams which cleave their way over the surface of time with gathering strength and purpose, seeking, beyond another coast than that from which their waters came, the tranquil ocean of eternity where they may be at rest. And as we gather flowers from the earth, which yields both flowers and weeds with indiscriminate profusion, so has all the purpose and design in the creation been plucked at first from amidst the multitudinous jungle-growth of an immense tangled chaos.

But what, it will be objected, is this chaos and blind chance? Is it not a mere name given by our ignorance

to that which is beyond our ken? This element of "chance" must presumably be subject to the law of universal causation or it could not exist at all; and if so, then what seems to be its random motion could with adequate knowledge be predicted. And hence, does not our "chaos" turn out to be a kind of cosmos, and does not all its blind confusion fit into a mighty system?

The matter is largely a question of terms. What is meant by chance, confusion, chaos, or disorder, and what is meant by order, system, cosmos, or design? Both act in obedience to necessary law, and yet there is a vast difference between the two. We speak of a result as due to design when it is the end towards which the process has from the first been tending. And in such a case we can, without knowing the exact nature of the forces which are at work, in large measure predict, from the visible movement of the process, the point to which it will at last attain. We do not need to estimate the hidden forces, for we can see the line along which the resultant process travels, and this line we can study, not merely as a product of the forces which have caused it, but as an individual fact conforming to an inner law of its own. On the other hand, a result is due to chance when it is not the end towards which the process has been tending from the first. And in such a case we must know the exact nature of all the forces which are at work if we are to predict the result. We cannot guess from the visible movement of the process what is the final point to which it will attain. The line traced out by the movement is the mere result of the forces when added together. We cannot study it as an individual fact conforming to any inner law of its own.

A vessel steams her course over the sea to the port. As we watch the line along which she travels we can without any further knowledge of the forces which are producing the motion, foretell with some degree of accuracy the region to which she will finally come ; and, when she reaches the haven, we feel that all her previous movements have had reference to this end. Quite otherwise is it with a derelict hulk which, driven hither and thither by every changing wind and carried by shifting currents towards all the quarters of the compass, at last, after years of helpless wandering over the wide waters of the ocean, is tossed by the gale and drifted by the tide into that same distant harbour. In this case we could indeed, if we knew exactly all the forces of wind and wave, predict each movement of the vessel and foresee her ultimate arrival at the port. But without this knowledge of the hidden forces we cannot, from watching the tortuous and zigzag line along which she has been travelling, make any such prediction. There is nothing in the beginning of her course to suggest this final issue of the journey rather than any other, and when she comes to port we do not feel that her previous meanderings have had all the time any inherent reference to this end. Her course is the mere result of the forces which have produced it, and cannot be regarded as an individual fact with an inner unity of its own.

Thus the words "order" and "design" imply that there is present a definite tendency in one direction, and the words "chaos" and "chance" imply that there is none.

The mighty system, then, began by random chance. On the distant threshold of time the mind

describes a primal chaos of forces fighting one against another. There was in them, and behind them, no intention of forming this fair world: they were driven by mere necessary law, and by this blind compulsion they clashed and strove together. This law was the law of brute force; for each element was fighting ceaselessly to assert itself against the rest, each striving to push the others out from its path, each striving to be supreme. They were not tending towards any common aim: that gradually arose at last by accident and they began to move towards it almost in spite of themselves.

If, then, the world has a heavenly creator, he certainly began the work in the strangest possible manner. Did he start by tossing the elements about, and then after countless ages, when he saw that they happened to form pleasing patterns, begin to bethink him that they might be turned to some account? But if so, then he has been gradually learning by means of many blunders. Or did he, while foreseeing every motion which would result and every combination which this tossing of the elements would form, deliberately choose this roundabout and wasteful method rather than any other? But if so, then while the result is certainly remarkable, we can only say that there has been a great deal of misapplied (because unnecessary) ingenuity. In either case the creator is not all-wise, and therefore not a being whom we can ever worship.

So should we say if all the patterns were wholly pleasing; but as a matter of fact they are not: and this is a yet more perplexing thing. Not only did the world begin in mere unmeaning strife, not only does the process still proceed in large measure

through the mechanical law of natural selection acting on a ceaseless flux of variability which is driven on by the iron hand of necessity, but the universe, even where the design and purpose appear most plainly to the eye, is filled with cruelty and pain and horror. The teeth of the shark or of the alligator, the claws of the tiger or the lion, the muscles and the enormous length of the boa-constrictor, the cobra's poisoned fangs, all betray a minute contrivance which fills us with astonishment, all are exactly adapted to their purpose and adjusted with the nicest skill, all seem to point beyond a doubt to an intelligence at work behind the world; but they do not clearly suggest that this intelligence is guided by love and moral goodness. Certainly the contriver of these marvellous weapons has been very kind to the shark and the alligator, to the lion and the tiger, to the python and the cobra; but he seems to be quite indifferent to the feelings of the wretched victims which writhe in their pitiless clutches. Perhaps he rather enjoys the sight of their agonies, and gloats in huge delight over the spectacle as they are rent and mangled limb from limb, or crushed into quivering pulp, or lured by the fascination of sheer terror into the ruthless, devouring jaws.

In our museums may still be seen, amongst the relics of bygone ages, the instruments of torture devised by the skill of man. Some of these are ingenious and clever beyond a doubt. They show a skilful contrivance and design, a method, an order, a purpose which proves them to be the work of a highly developed intelligence. The maker of such things knew what he was about. We cannot but admire his crafts-

manship, and recognise that he was a very clever person. But for all that we do not respect and reverence him. We admire his cleverness, but we despise and pity him for the use he made of it. Nor would it be any palliation of his wickedness if some of the victims who must suffer the tortures he has devised had also been equipped by him with defensive weapons to keep the torturer at bay. We should still turn with horror from the contemplation of his works, and should still regard him as a hateful monster. He has, of course, been very kind to the brutal tyrants who have availed themselves of his skill ; but even that indication of his benevolent disposition fails entirely to satisfy us.

This, then, is the deadly whirlpool which must inevitably engulf the theological boat unless she is prepared to heave overboard the time-honoured cargo of arguments from design. Part of the cargo has already gone. It has been cast into the evolutionary waves, where Natural Selection would not allow the ship to pass without exacting heavy toll. Much that had for so long been regarded as the work of deliberate design can now be so regarded no more, but is known to be the work, in large measure, of some principle of brute necessity which, for want of a better name, can only be called blind chance. With cargo lightened, then, the ship speeds on her way glad to have escaped with so much of her original freight out of the troubled waters. Before her is a more congenial region. Here the conflicting winds of brute necessity no longer lash the waters into foam. They are restrained by some other principle, the principle of intelligence. The region is an inland sea encompassed and protected by the immovable hills of Providence.

Here the voyage will be easy, free from all dangers and alarms. What though this sheltered stretch of water be not, as was at first supposed, the whole of the scientific ocean? What though it be, perhaps, but an insignificant nook compared with the unexplored expanse of wild and raging storm-tossed billows which spreads abroad in all directions outside the entrance to this land-locked sea? These tranquil waters have at least considerable extent and volume, far more than the eye can measure or can fathom. They are deep enough to float the vessel, and that is all that she really needs. Far as the eye can see they stretch into the dim distance and are lost at last in the golden haze where heaven and earth are mingled into one. On their placid bosom the voyage can be made in safety to the harbour which awaits the mariners beyond the far horizon.

Fearlessly they steer for these promising waters, glad to have escaped at last into the teleological sea. But what is this uneasy motion which they begin to feel? What is this unexpected influence which is dragging them into some lurking danger? The vessel will not answer to the helm. She is being hurried along, unwillingly caught by some hidden current. Then she feels a deadly force trying to drag her down into the depths below—a dangerous eddy, beneath the oily surface, threatening to engulf her. There is no help for it. The rest of the teleological cargo must be heaved overboard, if the crew are to be saved at all. In fact the ship must go back to dock and be completely overhauled. She is built partly of earthly timbers, and no earthly substance can possibly cross **that** fearful whirlpool without being sucked down and devoured. The ship must be rebuilt entirely of some

heavenly material, even the experience of the saints. Then, for her old cargo of earthly teleology, she must take a fresh cargo of heavenly teleology instead. Thus refitted and thus reladen, she can weather every storm with ease in the troubled waters of brute chance and can ride triumphant over the hidden whirlpools of the treacherous teleological sea.

To speak plainly, the world-process, as it stands, does not resemble the work of an all-wise or an all-loving God. If we are to infer the nature of the Creator from the facts of the creation taken all together, the conclusion must be that the whole system is the work of one who is sometimes marvellously wise and sometimes marvellously foolish, sometimes marvellously good and also sometimes, even where he shows the greatest cleverness, marvellously wicked. At first there was nothing but sheer brute necessity governed by no intelligence ; and a certain element of this blind force continues even still : and, moreover, the process often shows a callous disregard of all animal suffering against which the conscience of man rises in protest and revolt. On all sides the world is full of hideous pain. There is the suffering of the brute creation and there is the far more appalling problem presented by the sufferings of man. And, therefore, even though it were proved up to the hilt that the whole world showed a designing wisdom, giving to each thing its own appropriate form and purpose, the real difficulty would not have been touched. And since the facts suggest that in some parts of the world there is no designing intelligence at all, it is obvious that the Argument from Design is in a very precarious condition.

And yet it is not worthless. It has a certain value, and teleology has its place. If the reign of intelligence is not absolute, yet neither is that of brute necessity. On all sides we see what looks like a marvellous contriving skill at work, sweetly and wisely ordering all things. Moreover, stranger still, if there is cruelty all around us, yet there is some invisible Presence which makes its influence felt above the strife and discord. The words of blasphemy and hate fit somehow into that ineffable metre which sinks like heavenly music upon the soul. Go into the meadow or the forest, or up the still mountain side. All around there is strife and carnage ; on every hand kind preys upon kind. The caterpillar is being devoured alive by the larvæ of the ichneumon fly, the roach in the placid lake are fleeing in vain panic from the greedy pike, the rabbit writhes in the pitiless clutches of the ferret. All is pain and struggle. And yet the mind forgets these elements of discord, forgets the agony, forgets the sickening horror ; hears not the actual words of rage and hate ; is conscious only of the grand and glorious metre with all its subtle harmony of rhythm which, by some mysterious agency, pervades the whole great work. Above the strife and harsh cruelty and discord there is the still, sad, calm, ineffable music of Nature which penetrates into the hidden sanctuary of our being, and awakens there within us responsive echoes of eternity. The mind is by its influence purified and ennobled. It awakes, as it were, from its dull apathy and looks wistfully into that infinitude which is its proper home. Above the seething strife and warfare which rages perpetually in the natural world there is that still tranquillity which speaks to the heart of man, and

which we know by an absolute and intuitive perception of the truth to be akin to the best that lies within us.

Even so it is in every form of Nature's countless moods. The pitiless hand of winter which deals on all sides want and suffering to man and bird and beast, yet covers the earth with a fairy robe of loveliness which by its spotless purity brings to the mind mysterious suggestions of ideal perfection far beyond the reach of words. The raging storm, the devouring fire, the fury and the strife of the elements have, even while they spread destruction and havoc, something in them that is grand and glorious, and seem to veil some hidden power with which the mind of man is mysteriously linked by natural sympathy. Always, above all things and through them all, there is this intangible music of the spheres, this heavenly metre with its deep and passionate rhythm.

Moreover, the elements of beauty are found not only as a Presence dominating the whole great scheme, but also in particular instances which meet us on every hand. The tigress, which rends her prey with pitiless fury, will starve herself that her cubs may be fed. Even the most savage creatures have that maternal instinct of self-sacrifice, and will die in defence of their young. Side by side with the countless cruelties of Nature there is also a contrary principle of love and tenderness; and this fact is almost universal.

Equally strange is the mixture of intelligence and chance. Side by side with brute necessity there is another principle which uses brute necessity for its own definite ends and emerges with clearer and yet clearer purpose as the process advances. Natural

selection will not explain all things. It forms, indeed, the background; but out of this background there gradually emerges, in each organism, a vital impulse with definite laws and tendencies of its own, seeking by its own inherent nature to fulfil the ideal of its being. The fusion of allelomorphs existent in the parental stock will issue in the production of fresh specific characters, which will straightway try to assert themselves. If all things began in the mere blind clash of battling elements, and if there still remains in the universe much that betrays this origin, yet, by some strange influence of life within it, the mighty system seeks to form itself even by means of those random motions, and, using the force which they supply, presses onward, along a myriad independent paths of development, towards some distant goal of perfection.

It would seem, then, that the facts may all be brought under one comprehensive formula. It is this: That, while there exists as the background of the universe an ebb and flow of purposeless chance governed only by the law of brute necessity and expressing itself in strife and discord, the struggling stream is being gradually guided by an inner law of harmony and concord along definite channels of development. Thus, out of the strife of primal chaos, were produced the ordered motions of the planets, and out of the ceaseless variability in each species there comes the advance up the evolutionary scale.

Such is the formula: now for its interpretation. If we try to face the facts, it is quite plain that we cannot deduce from this world as it stands, nor yet easily reconcile with it, the conception of God's Nature

which has too often been offered for our acceptance. If a world so full of purpose and goodness must have behind it a Being who is intelligent and good, no less true is it that a world so full of evil and of purposeless waste cannot, as it stands, be the direct work of a Being who is perfectly good and who is also able to carry all His purpose immediately into effect. In other words, the world, as we see it and as natural science reveals it to us, cannot be reconciled with the conception of One who, besides infinite moral goodness, possesses also infinite coercive power. The facts of this world form a Procrustean bed from which there is no escape. On to this bed our theological beliefs must all be placed, and they can ultimately survive the process only if they succeed in fitting themselves within it. Now, this is precisely what the conception of an omnipotence consisting in force cannot possibly do. If we put it upon the bed, we find that large portions of it are promptly lopped off; in fact, it loses its feet and cannot stand upright. Unable any longer to carry us, it requires to be carried by us instead: it needs the support of apologetics—a sure sign of decrepitude. And so we try to perform the pious duty and to give it what first aid we can. We say that there is in God a principle of self-limitation whereby, though He has unlimited coercive power, yet He is prevented from using it; or else that omnipotence is a vague term; or else that the whole thing is beyond the range of our feeble minds. Anything, in fact, rather than give up the notion finally, completely and absolutely.

And yet this is what must be done. The conception of a Being who possesses infinite coercive power

in addition to infinite moral goodness will not through any human ingenuity fit the uncompromising bed. But there is another conception which will fit into it exactly. It is that of a Being whose omnipotence consists in His moral goodness and in nothing else. If God's power is itself nothing else than love, then all becomes clear and intelligible. Mystery of course there is, the ultimate mystery which none can understand ; but, given the facts of this finite world, they all drop into their place.

Take a metal disc and cut in it an intricate pattern. Then hold it on the pavement in a shower of rain. The random drops will fall through the interstices and will form the pattern on the pavement. Remove the disc and the pattern is there, and it shows a definite purpose which existed in your mind. And yet you did not cause the drops to fall ; you merely endured them. You waited quietly and held the disc in its place ; and by this slow and patient method you have achieved your purpose.

Such, in roughest outline, appears to be the way in which God brought the world at first into being. In the beginning there was nothing but strife and confusion as force struggled with primal force. The battling elements had behind them no purpose or design ; they merely strove together blindly, each trying to assert itself against the rest. And yet gradually out of these conflicts there arose a marvellous design, for God was using the conflicting elements as a means for fulfilling His great purpose ; and He was accomplishing the work not by compulsion but by submission, not by force but by enduring patience, not so much by what He did as rather by what He was

and is. In love alone is all reason and all truth ; for love is reason and is truth heated into that intense and burning passion in which they become really themselves. And love can win its victory by nothing but by waiting. The truth merely remains true, and in this calm assurance it quietly reposes until at last the raging forces of discord and strife stumble on some aspect of its being, and, having done so, cannot but manifest its presence henceforth by the formation which they now possess.

God's power consists in nothing else than love ; and this is the ultimate principle of all harmony, all truth, all beauty and all order. But love must suffer that which is opposed to its very nature, and only in so far as it does so is it truly itself. Only so can it reach its own final and absolute plane of perfect being, where the opposition is at last left far behind. Thus, because God is love and love consists in concord and in all that is the opposite of brute force, therefore there is a principle of discord and brute force which God must suffer and, by suffering, conquer, and, by conquering, transcend.

So from the beginning of infinite time has God been enduring the mutual strife and self-assertion of the raging elements, and has by slow degrees been winning them into harmony and order. And therefore it is that this mighty world is one vast tangle of order and confusion, of tranquil peace and ceaseless strife, of tender love and callous cruelty. Much has been done. The principle of self-assertion has on every side submitted, in greater or in less degree, to the principle of self-abnegation ; and, if it were not for this fact, the world would not cohere at all.

But the work has not yet reached its perfect end, for everywhere the principle of self-assertion still shows its hideous form. Therefore the process still continues, and God still works within it by the same patient method, still wins the gradual victory solely by being what He is.

At each point Reason wins its way by nothing but its own sweet reasonableness. Amidst the ebb and flow of ceaseless change, driven on by the law of iron necessity, an inherent permanence belongs always to those forms which are capable of fitting themselves into an ordered scheme. Thus, among all other casual combinations brought together by the conflicting waves of battling forces, these alone survive ; and from these points there start the different lines of development, while all other combinations vanish at once and are dispersed by the ocean on whose surface they have for one brief moment appeared. Each combination at first arises as nothing but the foam produced by the clash of the struggling waters, or by the crest of some on-rushing wave ; but, while all others are swept at once away, some remain, possess an existence of their own, develop, expand and grow. The foam has touched some principle of harmony which, drawn into its being, gives it, by its very nature, permanence and life. This combination remains when the rest have gone, because it has adapted itself, and its parts, into a scheme of law and order. It manifests no longer a mere principle of self-assertion, but also, to some extent at least, a principle of co-operation, and from this fact it obtains its own inherent permanence. The principle of goodness has, in its lowest and most elementary form, been

admitted into the raging strife. There is now amidst the chaos some harmony and goodness ; and, through this very fact, there is now some stability amidst the ebb and flow of battle. The principle of harmony and goodness being admitted, in however elementary and lowly a form, at once confers a permanence by the mere fact of being what it is.

The uneasy struggles of the creation can find their rest and home in nothing else than God ; and through their blind and ceaseless wrestlings they have brought the world into existence. And thus God has made the mighty frame of all things through no compulsion but in His own Divine manner—even by the mere attraction of His own perfect loveliness. To bend a thing against its nature is sheer violence ; and God, Who is not violent, cannot act that way. Instead of bending anything against its nature, He can but wait until it finds its own true nature in Him.

So it is that, as Plato says, the world has come into being through a principle of Necessity subdued by Reasonable Persuasion ; so it is that, in Aristotle's words, God moves the world as being an Object of thought and desire.¹ Nor is the conception confined to those great thinkers. It is taught by St. Thomas Aquinas, and can be abundantly illustrated from St. Augustine and many other sources. There is, therefore, about the notion nothing either heretical or new. It is, in fact, as old as European philosophy, and modern science merely illustrates it with a fresh and astonishing wealth of detail.

One striking passage from Plotinus may be quoted. This profound mystic had, in the depths of his spiritual

¹ *Met.* 1072a.

experience, beheld the face of Truth. Having beheld it, he knew to some extent its nature and, with the unerring instinct of mystical genius, he could give this intuitive knowledge the widest application. "The soul of the universe," he says, "remains in itself and works by means of the fact that objects approach unto it, while human souls must themselves approach the objects on which they work."¹

In the same spirit St. Augustine, to quote only one passage out of many in his writings which illustrate the same principle, explains God's final rest on the seventh day as being in truth the rest found by the creation which at last reposed in Him.² If this method be consistently applied, it follows that God's activity in making the world is really the activity of the world as it seeks for Him; and, though St. Augustine does not actually say this in so many words, yet the conclusion from his premises is unavoidable.

All things seek their own good, but the true good is God alone, Who is the principle of self-sacrifice. And hence all things, by trying to find it in the principle of self-assertion, seek it at first in the wrong direction. This fact, working at first on the lowest grade of existence, shows itself in the strife of primal chaos, where mere force struggles against mere force, each fighting for itself. And from this clash of opposing forces there can come no permanence. A permanence and development begins to arise in so far as the battling forces learn to adjust their conflicting claims and to work together for a common end. In so far as they do so they are manifesting, though for selfish reasons, something of that principle of self-

¹ *En.* iv. 3, 6.

² *De Gen. ad Lit.* iv. 16.

sacrifice which exists eternally in God ; and from this fact alone comes the stability by which the world has gained a foothold upon the slippery surface of chaos.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”¹ In these words the Lord has taught us the ultimate principles of human society. The astonishing fact revealed to us by modern science is that the same great principles apply to the whole method of creation, in which God has made the world by nothing else than the mere fact of His patient meekness.

The problem, then, raised by the discoveries of science is a problem as to the nature of God’s power. There are two conceptions radically opposed to one another, and if one is right then the other is wrong. There can be nothing vague about the opposition of black to white ; any attempt to fuse the two is useless. Either God’s ultimate power consists in a coercive force, or else it consists in sheer endurance and patient love and in all that is the exact opposite of force.

Now, if God’s power consists ultimately in force, then it is our difficult duty to draw a moral out of every occurrence in the world. All things then come from His hand, or at least by His permission ; and therefore must be regarded as the expression of His will. And if so, then there is nothing irrational or bad in the whole natural creation, excepting the disorder produced by the sin of Adam. We must not presume to find fault with the world as it was before the advent of man. To suggest that the pain and strife, the lavish waste and purposeless destruction, which mark the process from the first, can be considered imperfections is impious indeed. The world was made

¹ St. Matthew v. 5.

by One who possesses perfect goodness and also perfect power to perform His will ; and it must therefore be a faultless work if we could but understand it aright.

If, on the other hand, God's power consists only in His goodness, we are delivered from this pious and difficult duty. We are able frankly to say that, while the world is held together solely by the goodness which it draws from God, yet the system is to a large extent irrational and immoral, working by means of waste and stupidity and cruelty and cunning. These things subserve a higher purpose, for God's meekness is gradually inheriting the world ; nevertheless in themselves they are bad, and God shows His power simply in the fact that He can patiently endure them. It is no longer, then, the duty of piety to see God's hand directly at work in every detail of the universe. On the contrary, we are free to express our natural conviction that many things in the world come not from God, but from some opposing principle.

This conception of Providence is the only one that fits the facts revealed by natural science ; and it is also the only one that fits the teaching of our Lord. For a mistaken piety here, as so often, has been spinning cob-webs from its own fond fancy instead of accepting the truth as it comes from Him Who is its source ; and here, as so often, a false notion of omnipotence has prevented men from even attempting to accept the words of Christ at their plain and natural value.

What, then, is the Lord's teaching as to God's relation to the world ? It is precisely that which explains and confirms the facts revealed by science. In all things fair and lovely—in the flowers, the fields, the birds, in the varied and exuberant life which fills the

created universe—He teaches us to see the providence and marvellous goodness of a heavenly Father. The world is encompassed with His love, and from this source it draws its richness, its joy and beauty. But, on the other hand, there are many things which do not come from Him. Those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were not sinners above the rest of mankind, and their destruction was no special retribution. It could be made to bear a useful lesson, reminding men of that spiritual destruction which is the result of sin; but in itself the event was not providentially ordered, and was therefore not the work of God.¹

Precisely the same lesson is contained in the words which Christ is reported to have uttered concerning the man born blind. The disciples ask: "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"² And the question implies that all things in the world come from the providential hand of God, and that facts, which perplex the mind by their cruelty and apparent want of purpose, must be explained as judgments sent by Him to punish some secret wickedness. This whole conception Christ sweeps away. "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents, but that the glory of God might be revealed in him." Such perplexing facts are not Divine judgments. When they occur God can use them for a higher purpose, and, by showing His goodness in the miracle which cures them, He can bring good out of evil; but in themselves they are simply bad and are not His handiwork.

That this principle underlies all the Lord's miracles of healing is obvious. More remarkable still, it underlies one miracle performed upon the unconscious

¹ St. Luke xiii. 4, 5.

² St. John ix. 2, 3.

natural world. When Christ stilled the tempest there are two possible conceptions of this act, and only two. Either the tempest was the expression of God's will, in which case Christ was fighting against God; or else the miracle was a Divine work, in which case the tempest was contrary to God's will. Unless, therefore, we are to suppose that Christ could undo God's work, we are driven to the conclusion that the tempest was not sent by God. And this is no mere inference from general principles: a definite detail in the narrative makes the point absolutely clear. Christ, we are told, "rebuked the wind."¹ But this was precisely the way He treated unclean spirits.

Of course, the whole incident has been rejected on rationalistic grounds; but this fact need cause no very great trouble. Rationalism need not be taken very seriously. A little knowledge brought it into being, and a wider knowledge will sweep it away. But even if the miracle could be explained by some poor rationalistic device, yet the conception it enshrines would remain, and we should still have presented to us, as part of the earliest Christian tradition, the picture of a Christ Who treated the storm as the work of some rebellious power of darkness.

Christ, then, teaches both by word and deed that, while the goodness of God encompasses all things, and while God can bring good results out of evil, yet, quite apart from human sin, there is in the natural world a large element which is the work of some dark power opposed to God.

The Christian conception of the world thus needs no special pleading. It can stand upon its own firm

¹ St. Mark iv. 39.

base and needs no bolstering up with rotten arguments. It is itself the only possible explanation of all things ; it merely faces the facts. While it calls white and black it calls black. It does not put fetters upon us and bid us drown the clamour of all inconvenient questions by merely rattling our chains. It sets us at complete liberty, and gives us the privilege and the grave responsibility of absolutely free inquiry. The pain, the waste, the want of purpose in the world is bad ; and we are not called upon to explain this fact away. The beauty, the mysterious harmony and order in the world is good, and cannot be explained away. However it first came into being, it bears witness to itself that it is sent straight from God. This is its eternal value, for all truth and beauty is eternal, nor can any question of its actual origin touch its ideal and absolute validity.

Into some reservoir there rush from different sides through the open sluice-gates the roaring torrents of waters, and the surface of the lake is all confusion as the conflicting streams meet in fierce struggle and wild rage. The still heaven looks down upon the seething mass, but no reflection of its tranquil expanse is given back again, for this angry chaos of battling forces can afford no mirror to refract it. But serenely the calm heaven waits in the silent patience of its own eternity, until presently the fury of the waters begins little by little to abate. The streams are now finding their proper level, so that the surface of the reservoir no longer boils and bubbles like some gigantic cauldron. It begins at last to settle down, and, as it settles, it displays, first in countless patches strewn upon the rippling waves, then in ever-widening

expanses, as the waters begin to sink into repose, the image of that tranquil sky which all the time was looking on the conflict and waiting for it gradually to cease. At last there seems to reign a perfect tranquillity. Ripples there are which a nearer view can still detect, but from the distance all seems calm, as the still and placid waters now reflect, with almost perfect faithfulness, the mild and peaceful countenance of the azure sky. Thus heaven has waited, silent, unmoved, unchanged, until at last the troubled forces of this world have learnt by their own necessity to bear and show with ever-growing clearness the image of its ideal eternal beauty.

So then the whole world-process began, as the mere result of blind and necessary law, in what can only be called purest accident. This accident was bound to happen in the course of countless æons; and for it God waited in the calm confidence of eternal love,—so at least we must express the truth, who can but hint, by the poor symbols of time, at an eternity in which there is no waiting because there is no distinction of past or future. The mind is appalled as it tries to realise the terrific forces of Nature, with their blind and pitiless fury. But there is one thing that is more terrific and appalling still, one thing before which the mind of man may well sink back blinded and dumb and dead with utter bewilderment. It is the patient meekness of that everlasting Love which can endure the raging conflicts of all natural brute forces, can remain unchanged and steadfast amidst their aimless warfare, and can, by the gentle persuasiveness of its own inherent beauty, gradually win them into obedience to the higher law of concord.

CHAPTER IV

THE HOLY TRINITY AND CREATION

SUCH is the prospect which can be descried from the vantage ground afforded by a conception of omnipotence derived from the Cross of Christ. The land begins to spread out like a map below, and gradually to display its natural features. But the view is yet imperfect. Many pathways and winding streams, which may be detected appearing and reappearing at different points upon the plain, lose themselves once more and hide amidst the intervening knolls which are dispersed over the landscape. It will be necessary to climb yet higher up the mountain and to seek the very summit which will offer an uninterrupted view. That summit is the doctrine of the Trinity. To it the mind must mount, supported by the staff of faith and treading the beaten path of Catholic tradition.

Since God is love, and nothing else than love, His entire Being may be summed up in the one word self-sacrifice. God eternally sacrifices Himself, and in this act is contained the whole of His nature. But since His Being is absolute, there is nothing outside of Himself to which He can make this eternal offering of love. It follows that He sacrifices Himself eternally to Himself. His whole Being is one eternal act of self-love; and this self-love of God

is the only perfect unselfishness. He loves Himself in utter and complete self-abandonment.

Thus God sacrifices Himself to Himself; and He can do so only by means of an eternal act of self-sacrifice. And this act of self-sacrifice, since it wholly expresses all His nature, can be nothing else than His very Being and Himself. Thus God gives Himself to Himself by an unchanging act which is Himself. While remaining undivided, He Himself is Lover, He Himself is the Beloved, He Himself is the Act of Love in which He loves Himself.

Such is the doctrine of the Trinity, the crowning mystery of the Christian Faith, and the only possible way of expressing the fact that God's whole Being consists in Love. For here, as always, is to be found the inner heart of the truth; here is the jewelled key to the final mystery of all things. Genuine, selfless love is the one great paradox of the universe; and therefore it is that a paradox is found as the very essence of the Divine Nature. Nor could it be otherwise. Human thought and language, moulded as they are by the needs of the material world, utterly break down in the attempt to convey a spiritual Reality. They can but hint at it by means of a sheer self-contradiction; and the doctrine of the Trinity is merely a noble effort (the best and, indeed, the only one conceivable) to express an ultimate fact beyond the reach of words. It is but an endeavour to realise the truth that God's whole self-assertion consists in self-annihilation, and that the absolute love with which He loves Himself is nothing but the purest and completest self-surrender.

Love, then, pure, generous, holy and unselfish

Love, this, when intensified into its own infinity, is itself the complete sum total of God's whole Nature and Being. The formula which sums up this truth is the doctrine of the Trinity, and this formula will be seen at work in the whole process of evolution. There we shall see made manifest three distinct aspects of Being, without which it is impossible to read a meaning into the mighty universe.

The conception of the world which was regarded as the religious one a few years ago, besides being totally unphilosophic, was almost totally devoid of all moral and religious value. It was a notion based entirely on the thought of God's transcendence, and applying this aspect of the truth in the harshest possible way. God, it was said, created the world by the act of His irresistible will. He could have made it differently if, in His wisdom, He had seen fit so to do ; but, since He has made it as it is, we can only offer Him our thanks and gratefully adore this exhibition of His might. The world is merely a thing, and God has fashioned it just as the potter forms a pitcher out of a lump of clay. The world is His work, and He who has put it together could destroy it if He wished. It is merely a machine which He has constructed and, having constructed, now controls.

It is not difficult to see the cloven hoof peeping out from beneath the robe of piety with which this theory is adorned. The whole conception rests upon the notion of a Deity whose power consists in force. Such an one naturally creates by the arbitrary fiat of His will, merely because He sees good so to do ; and such an one could also, if He willed, destroy. Why He should

have created flies is a problem that seems to have puzzled St. Augustine. The existence of crocodiles is another somewhat disturbing fact. But a robust and vigorous piety can manage to swallow many nasty things that do not agree with its constitution. God be praised that the piety can be so robust as to take such potions without being killed outright. But, alas! for human blindness, which can believe a noxious poison to be a wholesome, if unpalatable, food.

In course of time, however, the human frame can become so much accustomed to most kinds of poison that without them it begins to languish. And this fact received not long ago a striking illustration. The time-honoured and unphilosophical theory of creation came face to face with the theory of evolution. The cup from which the religious world had been drinking its daily portion was dashed hard against the solid wall of scientific facts. It fell in shattered fragments, and its contents trickled on the stones. The religious world was shocked and scared, and at first refused to believe that the thing was true. But at last it settled the matter by reflecting that, after all, the chinks and crannies between the stones of the offending wall would hold quite, or almost, as much of the precious fluid as the cup itself had ever contained. And, if you could not drink the draught straight from the theological goblet without any thought or reflection, you could at least manage, with no very great inconvenience, to collect a certain quantity of it from between the scientific stones. The old Argument from Design had gone for ever, but a new and less confident kind of argument from design had taken its place. God had certainly chosen a very roundabout way of achieving

His ends, but still there could be seen on every hand some tokens of His power.

This, of course, is true. God's power is to be seen at work on every hand. At the same time, the theory of evolution is happily more far-reaching than we will readily admit. One thing it does with absolute finality : it renders quite impossible the old conception of God's omnipotence.

The notion of mere transcendence having been discarded through pressure of scientific facts, that of mere immanence began to take its place. God had not created the world from outside, but was, instead, forming it from within. The world is not His work, but is His body ; and He acts, not upon the system as its contriver, but in it as the very principle of its existence.

So far so good. This is better in many ways than the old-fashioned anthropomorphism. And yet the new conception will be found to contain more than a trace of the old malignant poison. For, after all, a cosmic force, or a vital force, or whatever else we choose to call it, has this in common with the now discredited despot, that it is a power consisting in force and therefore not a thing we can really worship. But, apart from that, the cup containing this draught of philosophical nectar is itself badly cracked and will not hold its contents. A theory of mere immanence is inconsistent with itself and will not hold together.

For if the world is a process at all, then it must be a process towards something. It must be moving in some direction or other ; it must, consciously or unconsciously, have some sort of goal. And this goal must be something beyond the universe as it actually

is ; for otherwise the process is no longer a process at all. If a river is flowing towards the sea, then the sea must be beyond the waves of the river at any given point. If I am going from London to York, then York must be beyond me until I reach the end of my journey. Hence if the world is moving towards something (and unless it is doing so it cannot be called a process), then the something towards which it is moving must be beyond it until it reaches the end of its journey and the process is complete and over.

Thus you cannot logically believe that God is immanent in the world without also holding that He is transcendent above it. And, of course, it is really, though not so obviously, true that you cannot logically hold the fact of His transcendence without also holding the fact of His immanence. For, even supposing evolution had not destroyed the old "despot" theory, yet if God makes the world from outside, He can only do it in one way—by putting into His work His thought and His activity, and, in a word, His Being and Himself. But this means that the theory of God as outside the world and beyond it demands the theory of God as present inside the world to give the whole conception cohesion. God merely beyond the world is impossible, and God merely in the world is impossible. He must be immanent within, and He must move towards Himself as transcendent beyond. And, moreover, He can do so only by means of His activity, which is the Third Term in which the two sides of the truth are united. In fact, the whole material world shows forth in time the Being of the eternal Trinity.

Transcendence, then, and immanence, instead of being two contradictory theories, are really nothing else

than the concave and the convex of the same great curve of Divine activity. They are not even different ingredients which must be brought together, but are actually one and the same indivisible spiritual fact. For God transcends the natural world not by being outside it, but by being so infinitely deep within its fabric that it cannot, as it were, reach into itself and touch Him, and give utterance to that ultimate truth which is the secret of its being. Even thus a poet's transcendent thoughts may often lie so deep beneath the surface of his words that these imperfect forms of human speech can barely hint at that profound and perfect meaning with which his genius has endowed them.

"Thou wast within and I was outside," says St. Augustine, as he thinks of his own past struggles for the light. And when he describes the manner in which its beams finally broke upon him, he can but describe it by the same great paradox. "Where did I find Thee," he says, "except within myself, or rather in Thyself above me?" This is the great truth which has been discovered through his own profound experience by every one, in each succeeding age, that has penetrated into the hidden heart of things. The all-holy God transcends the sinful human soul by the very intensity of His immanence; God is infinitely beyond us only by being infinitely deep within us; He is far from us only by being nearer to us than our own soul; He is raised above us by the very lowness of His love.

And since this is so, as the experience of the saints declares, in the world of the human heart, it must be so in that other world of the whole material universe.

He is in the mighty fabric so intimately as to be beyond it; He is nearer to the natural world than the natural world is to itself. Penetrating into the inmost recesses of life, there the mind must reverently seek for that Divine Principle of Nature Whom Nature herself struggles and strives to find in her endeavour to express her own hidden secret.

Transcendence, then, and Immanence are really one and the same great and final fact. We cannot, however, speak about them without distinguishing the one from the other. But we must distinguish them not as two separate things, but only as different sides of the same identical truth. Neither is possible without the other, and we cannot, without them both, form a philosophic conception of the world. There must be God as Goal ; there must be God as immanent Principle ; there must be also that Divine Activity by which the Principle pushes forward to the Goal.

It needs not to be said that this is the doctrine of Plato, who here, as in most purely speculative matters, seems to have said the final word. The universe, he teaches, is the work of a Demiurg, and this Demiurg is God. And, as he makes the world, the Demiurg has before him an heavenly Exemplar, and this Exemplar is the Idea of Good : in other words, it is God. And the world which is thus created is itself "God in sensible form." Thus God makes the world by that Divine activity within it which conforms it to God Himself.¹

This explains the profound words of St. Thomas, who says that God creates the world "as being desired by Himself." God in the world as its inner

¹ Timæus.

Principle of Being beholds that Ideal which is Himself, and, beholding it, He loves it and longs to reach and clasp it to His bosom. So, drawn by the mighty magnet of His love, He presses through the tracts of time, sinking inwardly from depth to depth of His own Being, and bears with Him the whole created universe towards its far distant goal. Such, in Shelley's words, is the motion of

“that sustaining love
 Which, through the web of Being blindly wove
 By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
 Burns bright or dim as each is mirror of
 That fire for which all thirst.”

The “sustaining love” that “burns” within the universe is itself that very “fire for which all thirst,” because the brightness with which it burns in the universe is the reflection of those heavenly flames. What else is this than the mystic experience that God within the world is seeking Himself as the world's own final Goal; in short, that He creates all things through the great fact that he desires Himself?

Not less sublime, profound and wonderful are some words of St. Augustine. God, he says, creates the world simply by showing His Eternal Son the Ideal; and the Eternal Son creates the world from within by seeing the Ideal. Moreover, St. Augustine adds that perhaps the Father is not merely One who shows: He is actually the “Shewing”; He is the Demonstration or Revelation. And the Son is not merely One who sees: He is the “Seeing”; He is the Perception or, as we might put it, the Eye that beholds. Thus we have God as that which is seen and God as that which sees. And thus God creates the world not by any coercive

force, but solely by virtue of the fact that He beholds Himself. He gazes on His Own perfection with an infinite and ineffable love which draws the whole creation onward towards that unattainable region in which He, by penetrating into the inmost abyss of time, transcends time's limitations, and there, in that eternity where time becomes truly itself, He possesses far within His Being, ever perfect and complete, the glorious and burning vision of His own unchanging beauty.

God, then, is love, and nothing else than love. And hence it is that the mighty universe advances, though with groanings unutterable and over a path strewn oftentimes with piercing thorns and scorching coals of fire or blocked with iron barriers or rent with yawning chasms, on towards some unknown, hidden goal, drawn blindly by the attractive power of a Love which moves, and cannot but move, to seek its own true self. Even so the whole creation travaleth and groaneth together, seeking for the redemption of the sons of God.

Such, then, is the theory of creation demanded by evolution. It will be well to see a little more in detail how the theory applies.

One great factor in the production of fresh species is to be found in Natural Selection. There is an iron flux of stern and hard necessity, whereby the world, like some vast pitiless mill, grinds and still grinds for ever without ceasing; and, though you give it oats or wheat or barley, still the machinery continues unconcerned and subdues with relentless persistency whatever it finds between its stones. The grain cannot fight against its action: it can but submit, and allow itself

to be ground into flour, obediently accepting the form which the mighty mill inevitably prescribes.

Does a creature happen to possess some quality of physical strength or fleetness, or some instinct of cunning which will help it to escape its foes or to seize and kill its prey ; has it some accidental marking on its skin which will help it to pass undetected through the dappled forest glades, or else a tawny hue which will make it invisible on the sandy desert ; has it, in short, any quality which will aid it in the struggle for existence : then that particular creature will survive and propagate its kind when its less fortunate brethren are destroyed. And in all its descendants those will survive the longest who possess this quality in the most pronounced degree ; and they will transmit this quality to their own offspring in their turn. The process is thus governed by a mighty natural law which is absolutely pitiless and absolutely blind.

There is, however, at work another law, which emerges with ever-growing clearness as time goes on. Within the organisms lies a secret vital power whereby they can cohere and can expand, seeking to use the law of blind necessity for their own ends, and to fulfil their natural destiny. They are not the mere chance products of external and conflicting forces ; they possess instead a hidden principle of being. Though the grain cannot fight against the action of the mill, yet it finds itself, in some mysterious way, endued with a certain power of directing its own fortunes. It can choose to fall between a coarser or a finer pair of stones ; and according to this choice will the flour into which it shall be ground be modified.

There are, then, in the world these two great principles. There is the blind and brute compulsion of conflicting forces acting from without upon each other and only coming to a compromise as each tends to neutralise the rest; and there is the law of harmony and reason acting from within and endowing with permanence and life the chance products of the conflicts. Something was said in the last chapter on the manner in which these two principles interact. But, to pursue the matter further, a fresh conception was needed, and that conception is afforded by the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. This is the key that unlocks the problem and will make the matter clear; this will explain the interaction of the two great opposite powers. For this is the doctrine which alone will give a satisfactory theory of God as immanent in the world; and without a theory of immanence the problem is insoluble.

Underlying the whole material universe is the Eternal Word; and when the battling forces, in their unwearied warfare, chance finally to light upon some harmonious combination, they have at that one tiny point touched the still and tranquil ocean of His unchanging Essence. Forthwith that combination, through its contact with this hidden Life, is itself endowed with life and permanence, and draws from Him an inner cohesion of its own. A system has been formed with its own inward law. It still possesses the same forces which first brought it into being; but these are now no longer shown in random and aimless conflict. Co-ordinated and thus turned into a definite impulse with a direction and an aim, they now no longer boil and rage together in the whirlpool of

confusion ; but have settled into one fixed channel in which they speed upon their way.

Thus, then, finally appears the organism with its own innate tendency, by which it will expand and grow and will produce a similar offspring to continue the line of advance. Some element of the blind confusion in which it first began will, no doubt, still be manifest as it pursues its journey. The waves, which have settled into their appointed channel, will often jostle still against each other as the stream flows on its course. But more and more they tend to submit to the law of their corporate movement and to use all their force for hastening on together towards their one appointed end. Even so there will appear in the organism a certain blind and purposeless element. Variations will occur in it which appear to be mere freaks, and it is largely at the mercy of sheer external forces. But, as time goes on, it settles down more and more into its own particular channel. Its variations and development gather purpose and direction. It tends with growing impulse to fashion itself from within, and in the course of ages more and more it seeks, instead of being the slave of external necessity and natural selection, to modify external things to itself and to mould its own environment.

Thus the Eternal Word informs the living universe through no compulsion or coercive force ; but gazing on the Ideal and remaining in the patience of immutable love, He, by the bare fact of being what He is, thus gently, softly, imperceptibly subdues the raging forces of confusion. Strong in the strength of love, He waits until the struggling elements put themselves inadvertently under His yoke, and then He guides

them onward along the path of progress. Solely by being perfect goodness and solely by desiring that Good which is Himself, He wins the universe to move along its course and gives it a tendency to advance towards some mysterious Goal.

And so the process of evolution still moves onward. And, as it moves, we see in it a strange, mysterious thirst and quest for God. Cruel and pitiless it often is as it crushes many a helpless thing beneath its wheels; for the horses which draw the car, though yoked and bridled, are of a fiery breed and cannot be stopped on their course. Nevertheless, wild and impetuous though they are, their heads are set in the right quarter, and they are learning to be, though not checked, yet guided, and to obey more and more the direction of the reins in their ceaseless onward flight. More and more, as they plunge through the gloom and darkness, they are in unconscious quest for One Whom they seek because He, holding the reins that guide them, is thirsting and is yearning for Himself. And far beyond the utmost boundary towards which the car toils ceaselessly but in vain, there is a region of eternal light where, in the Being of the blessed Trinity, this thirst and this yearning are satisfied.

Such, in broadest outline, are the principles at work. In the primal chaos, from which all things began, there was nothing but haphazard chance and the blind struggle of force with force; from whence arose, in the course of countless ages, the mighty universal frame. And the universe cohered by virtue of the fact that the battling forces had learnt to obey some law of mutual peace; and thus there was within its fabric a principle of harmony side by side with that of aimless

conflict. There was not uninterrupted harmony, for the work was by no means perfect. Only just so much of this unifying principle was present as had been able to insert itself at the point where the striving elements had touched it; only just so much as would keep the whole system together. Nevertheless a considerable quantity there was, for otherwise the elements could not cohere at all. Amidst much aimless confusion of storm and tempest and raging elements, there was one great and universal law by which the whole now moved in its own proper path.

This principle of order, shown in the circular motion of the heavenly bodies, was contained within the fabric of the world. Within the very texture of this earth it lay as a principle of life. And from within it struggled forth, and hence arose the plant and hence the animal. In a word, this was the origin of the organism. And thus life upon the surface of this planet arose not as the mere product of strife and chance, but to some extent, at least, as the result of an inner vital force within the earth's mighty womb. This vital force was there and must fulfil its proper law by expanding and emerging into organic existence.

But though the organism was thus from the first the product of a vital force endowed with law and harmony, it was also in large measure moulded by that same blind chance and conflict which had brought the whole world into being. The vital force is pushing its way upwards to the light; but it can only succeed and emerge from its dark prison where it finds a way and an outlet. It must insert itself where it is able between the chinks and crannies of the encompassing confusion. Where circumstances lie tumbled

by the struggles of battling forces, it must gently feel its way, and, at whatever point it can find a narrow fissure, it will press on towards the light ; whenever, on the other hand, it finds its course blocked and hindered, it will turn aside and seek, if possible, an opening in some other place.

Thus the direction of the vital force is given, to a great extent, by chance. The force is there, and struggles to emerge, but where it will emerge depends, to a large extent, on external circumstances. It is continually struggling to produce some living organism, but what the organism is to be, its shape, its qualities, its nature, is determined very greatly by the circumstances with which it has to fight.

Such, then, is the vital force which flows through the veins of the universe ; such is the ceaseless impulse which carries all things on their way. It has in it two elements which are its matter and its form : it consists of a sheer brute power of blind and random force which has learned to be gradually guided by one harmonising law.

Thus sheer brute force, which is opposed to God, when touched by His gentle taming influence becomes itself divine. No longer is it purposeless, no longer a jarring conflict. Touched by the Hand of God, it has harmony and aim. It moves at first uncertainly ; but, gathering purpose as it goes, it pushes the mighty system on the upward path of advance to seek its final rest in God. Even so do the jarring passions which struggle in mankind appear at first as something that is wholly opposed to God, and, when used by each man for himself alone, they issue in strife and discord until human life is a chaos. But let the heart of man be

touched by the sweet influence of God : straightway the strife is gone and harmony prevails. Each person thinks now no longer of himself, but of his brother man. No longer is there a random strife of one against another, for all are joined together now into one united purpose. The passions which caused the strife are not destroyed ; but they are freed from the tyranny of self and given one common direction. The anger of selfish rage has disappeared : it has been changed by the touch of God into the holy wrath of righteous indignation against injustice and wickedness. Brutish lust is gone : it has been turned into that sacred mystery which is a fitting emblem of Christ's union with His Church. The fighting instinct and the thirst for blood have been changed into that splendid courage which makes men heroes for a high and noble cause. The selfish love of power and influence becomes that pure delight which some have known who have blessed God that they, although unworthy, have been allowed to influence another soul for good. All human passions, when self is at work behind them, bring man into conflict with his brother man and are the work of the devil ; yet take from them the principle of self, give them, instead, the principle of unselfishness, inspire them with the love of God, which is the love of That Which is Not Self, and the same passions now become the means of drawing close the bonds of brotherhood and driving mankind, by one imperious impulse, towards the Kingdom of Heaven.

Moreover, the stronger is the gentle influence of God, the stronger will these very emotions become. The more a man grows in the knowledge and love of God, the stronger will be his holy anger at all the

cruelty and sin of which the world is full, the stronger, too, that fighting instinct which will prompt him to battle for the right. There is no anger equal to the wrath of Christ against hypocrisy, no reforming zeal more intense than that He showed in the cleansing of the Temple. He Who was, and is, eternal God was bound, in the last resort, as the final completion of His earthly life, to suffer evil and not resist it : nevertheless He was possessed on earth of human passions and emotions, and these He showed at their fitting season, in His burning wrath against the works of Satan—a wrath the hidden fires of which were fed in that still region of His patient meekness. Because God is love and nothing else than love, therefore God's human passion of anger, when He lived as Man upon this earth, blazed forth as a consuming furnace against all things that distort love's glorious revelation.

Thus human passion first of all begins as a mere power of brute force opposed to God ; and yet, when guided and obedient to His will, it does not lose its force, but becomes yet more intense. It draws into itself the fire of God's sheer patient grace ; and this fire it assimilates into its own very being, converting it into an intenser and a far more passionate heat. God's power is the exact opposite of force, and yet all noble human passion draws from Him a strength which is a force. God's power can draw and cannot compel : it is a magnet and not a thing which drives ; and yet pure human passion for all that is true and beautiful, feeling the drawing of that magnet, takes this influence into its own being, and there it converts the attractive power of God into a divine force and impulse within its nature driving it onward to its goal.

The ship is seeking to reach the distant port from which the breeze is blowing. She is furnished with nothing but sails ; and with the aid of these she must accomplish her course. But the sails appear a hindrance. It seems that the wind, as it blows upon them from the port, can only drive the vessel farther and farther away. And yet the skilful mariner can use that breeze for his purpose. By the aid of careful tacking he can sail in the teeth of the wind. He knows the proper angle and thus he guides his bark. He collects the breeze of heaven into the sails of his earthly passions. The canvas is filled, it drives the good ship on her way ; and so he speeds his course, onward and ever onward, over the wide waters of life. Then finally he reaches the port from which the wind is blowing ; and there he furls his sails which now he needs no more, since in that tranquil harbour of Eternity all passions are at rest.

Even so is God's omnipotence of mere love the exact opposite of all that can be called by the name of force ; and yet the vital force of physical life or of human passion may draw from Him, when under due control, a greater and an ever greater impulse. Even so it uses the Divine grace and converts this into added force whereby it may impel the world along to that far distant harbour of eternal rest in God. And when, beyond the limits of this finite world, this mysterious force has reached the distant port, there it will have ended all its task and there it will finally cease and be at rest. Transmuted thus beyond its earthly nature, it will be changed from impulse into peace, from force into a tranquil power of meek and patient stillness.

And thus it is that in each organism there is the

power of growth. Small and insignificant would have appeared to the outward eye the first simple living form which emerged upon the earth,—one tiny cell, and that was all, a thing that seemed to have before it no great destiny. And yet that single cell led on to vast results. In course of time came growth and immense expansion, by means of a gradual and ceaseless multiplication of parts. The one cell subdivided and subdivided and grew into a countless cellular system ; and so from that small beginning arose the infinite variety of complex life. And still in the history of each higher organism the same great process continues. Still the human embryo starts as a single cell and finally comes to maturity by the same process of subdivision : the single cell, so tiny and so simple as it appears, contains within itself the power of growing into a man. The mighty oak, that spreads abroad its roots and branches, comes from the mere unfolding of a germ within the acorn ; and on all sides great results arise from the smallest beginnings. And this mysterious power is due to the one great fact that all the life within the world is in touch with an infinite life beyond.

For behind the acorn and each tiny cell is that unbounded Love which, though it is the exact opposite of force, yet, being drawn into the world, augments there all the vital force it touches, and thus imparts an impulse and a motion to carry each living thing upon the path of its natural development. The acorn, by its own innate vital force, draws something from this Divine reservoir of Being ; and that essence which it draws it converts by this very fact into vital force and impulse, so that it can grow and can expand, and from

that simple beginning become the complete and perfect tree. And thus, by drawing each moment fresh supplies from the same eternal Fount, each organism, and the whole great process of the world, moves on from stage to stage.

And finally it is this great fact that explains another problem. By it is solved, so far as need be solved, the problem of Christ's miracles. By it can be dimly guessed how God, whose power consists in love, yet when He lived upon this earth could exercise at times a power of force.

Christ possessed a human body, and only so could He be revealed and live on earth as God. And His body, belonging as it did to the natural order of the world, must obey the laws of its own physical nature. Even so the sunlight shines through a window, and, but for the window, could not be revealed or act within the room ; and yet the window is not itself the light, but only a means for its entrance. The light is not a solid thing and is subject, not to the laws of ordinary matter, but to those which govern the ether. It is not a barrier impeding the movements of solid things, nor does it oppose itself by a power of brute force to any material activity. I move from place to place within the light and it does not bar my way. All round me, as I walk, this mysterious element bathes me in its liquid glory, and yet it leaves my motion absolutely free from any check or hindrance. All things may pass through it unhampered and unrestrained ; and while it strikes upon them with its radiance, the blow does not break them or push them from their places.

Not so the glass by which the light enters the room. This is a solid thing and obeys the laws which govern

solid bodies. And, being such, it is a barrier impeding the movements of other solid things and opposing itself by the power of sheer brute force to the freedom of their activity. In moving my hand I strike against the window, and the glass bars my way and checks my motion. There is between the window-pane and my hand a struggle of force with force, nor is the struggle ended till one or the other gives way. Perhaps, with the impact, the window-pane is broken; but even so it cuts the hand which conquers and passes through it.

Thus was God revealed by means of a human body; and thus His human body obeyed its physical laws. And thus, though His omnipotence consists in nothing but in love, that omnipotence of love could be revealed through nothing but a body endowed with vital force. Except by force a body cannot move and act upon the world. Each time I eat, each time I tread the grass beneath my feet, each time I raise my hand and, in so doing, move the air, I am employing force and cannot but do so. I am acting from without upon some other thing. I am moving from without that which seeks to bar my way. However gently I may act, yet some force there is or I could not act at all.

And to this great law the human frame of Christ submitted: else it had been a phantom and no reality. By vital force it lived, by this it moved, by this it acted on the world around. This fact was the limitation of His earthly life. And since in Him that vital force was always in touch with the ultimate Fount of Being, therefore in Him it had a wondrous power whereby He could command the natural world and it must obey His mandate. The

stores of life absorbed from that Fount of Love must, in His physical body, be converted into vital force; and hence in Him that wondrous extension of the body's normal powers.

None the less this miraculous power would seem to have been not arbitrary or coercive. It acted not by overriding nature's laws, but by the power of a knowledge and sympathy in touch with their hidden secret. Christ reverenced nature and natural law, and seems to have conquered by obeying. When He multiplied the loaves, or stilled the tempest, or when He healed the sick, we may dimly conjecture that the method was essentially the same. That vital force which He possessed in His human frame evoked by sympathy within the natural world an answering impulse, which straightway arose and woke from its deep slumber, and from its warmth of wakening life all fetters melted away.

So too with the miraculous powers which Christ has left His Church. These we should still possess, as God grant we may recover them, if but our faith were strong. The power to heal the sick by prayer is intended still to be ours, and would be ours if we could but come into contact with the one great Source of Life. So too, though in a less degree, in our relations with the natural world at large. It is not a vain and foolish thing to pray for rain, or for fine weather. If we possessed the heightened vital powers which would come from living contact with Him whose strength is a strength of mere love, we should be able perhaps in some degree to control, by spiritual activity, the very motions of the seasons.

These gifts are valuable; and these might result

from faith. But they must not be sought, and they cannot be found, in themselves and for their own sake. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all things shall be added unto you"; such is the Lord's command. God must be sought for His own sake, because He is love, and for no other reason. And He must be sought with full readiness to suffer with Him in His own patient suffering. Then, if such gifts accrue, let them be welcomed; but if they come not, the faith is not for that the less divine. The divinest thing that we can learn on earth is simply how to suffer in the strength of weakness. This will make us more like Christ than all miraculous powers.

For Christ, it would seem, possessed this power of miracle only while, for a time, He dwelt upon this earth. It came from those earthly limitations which perfect Love accepted. But, having passed beyond the heaven of heavens, He now has left all earthly things immeasurably behind. From the earth He sprang to the realms of glory, and thus He used the natural world as a means to bring Him to His home. But now that He has reached that heavenly region, the earth from which He obtained the impetus that brought Him there, lies far beneath His feet. And therefore the power of working direct miracles (such as are not an answer to the human prayers of His disciples) has now been far transcended and is to be sought in Him no more. He has passed beyond the utmost bounds of any vital force, and dwells for ever in that far more marvellous omnipotence of heaven which consists in nothing but in patient love.

This, then, be it once more repeated, is the key to every problem; this is the one grand truth which

alone explains the facts. Start with the conception of omnipotence as consisting solely in love, and all the riddles that confront the mind at once become luminous and clear. Not only does this key unlock the doors of every theological difficulty ; it fits with equal nicety the facts of natural science.

For love, to be completely itself, must always inevitably suffer, enduring in changeless patience the opposition of that which is contrary to its very nature. Love is self-sacrifice or else it is nothing ; and how can self-sacrifice ever be if all is easy and pleasant ? A deed of kindness is not kind unless you put yourself to trouble to perform it, and so submit to some discomfort. The trouble may, indeed, be welcomed with delight ; for love can change all things to gold : but in itself it is mere trouble which you would never undergo but for the influence of love. It is in its own essence irksome ; and you learn to take a pleasure in it only because love's very nature is that self-sacrifice which must endure all that from which it naturally shrinks, or else must lose its very life and soul.

Therefore, if God is love and nothing else than love, there must be something contrary to His Being for Him to suffer and endure in His self-sacrifice. Only by submitting in patient meekness to this harsh opposition can He truly sacrifice Himself to Himself in pure disinterested love. If there were nothing contrary to His Being, struggling and fighting against Him, then His love would be a selfish thing and would be no love at all. God loves Himself unselfishly, and therefore He must suffer evil. And just as in human deeds of kindness the endurance of hardship is not undertaken for its own sake, but is

a means of conferring some benefit and help upon another person, so it is in God's endurance of the evil that is ever pitted against Him. He suffers the evil, not for its own sake, but as a means of bringing some great gift to that Self of His which He loves unselfishly ; for by bearing the evil God leads the whole creation on towards God, its final Goal.

God, then, is love. And love is that which sees and feels ; it is true spiritual intelligence ; it is impassioned reason. And therefore there must be a principle of blind mechanical chance, grinding on by the sheer necessity of purposeless, brute force. Only by facing this opposing power can God attain to those celestial spheres where it finally is vanquished and utterly done away.

And this brute force had no commencement. Through centuries and æons of endless time the mind may still move backwards in unceasing regress, yet it will find still the same turmoil of blind confusion and haphazard brute necessity. Each moment of blind discord sprang from a preceding moment of blind discord, which itself sprang out of even such another. Backward the mind travels in its vain search for some point where it may dwell and be at rest ; backward through the tracts of endless time it presses, ever seeking and looking for some first originating cause ; backward it sinks for ever and for ever ; but still the quest is fruitless. There is no beginning to that strife of battling forces which has been raging from the dawn of beginningless time. Ever since time has been—time which has no commencement—that struggle of forces has been waged ; and, though in the course of ages it has gradually been tamed into

harmony, yet it existed from the first as a mere blind unmeaning discord.

But if it had no beginning, is it not then eternal and co-equal with God Himself? No, it is not eternal, for endless time is not eternity. It is not equal with God, for God is above the sphere of time.

In the *De Civitate* St. Augustine deals with the problem here involved. He teaches that, while the present frame of the universe with all the forms of life that dwell upon it had a definite beginning in time, yet the process whence it draws its origin had none, but began not "in" time but "with" it. Now time itself, he seems to teach both in this treatise and elsewhere (though he is not clear, or, perhaps, consistent), never had a beginning; for it would, he says, be a self-contradiction to say that there ever was a time when time was not. The implications of this theory he boldly faces when he deals with the angelic creation. The angels have, he says, always existed. And yet they are not co-eternal with God, because He is immutable while they are subject to change.¹

St. Thomas also teaches that the world is as old as time; but he definitely maintains that time itself is limited. Nevertheless he says that this is held by faith and not by reason, and he shows a profound respect for the theory that time had no commencement. And he adds that even if this theory were correct, yet the world would not be eternal, for the moments of time are successive, while those of eternity are simultaneous.²

¹ Bk. xi. 4-6, xii. 15, 16. Cf. *Confess.* xi. 13. Cf. also Aristotle, *Met.* 1071, b.

² *Summa*, Q. x. Art. 4, Q. xlvi. Art. 1, 2, 3.

What, then, is eternity and what is endless time? Eternity is the ultimate goal of time: it is not the never-ceasing process. It is the infinite ocean towards which time's waters flow; it is not the endless river which presses on to seek that far-distant bourne. It is the magnetic pole which draws the needle: it is not the motion of the needle as it turns towards the point of attraction. But that the river seeks the sea, it would be no river and would not flow; its waters would remain stagnant, and there would be no stream at all. But that the needle seeks the pole, it would be no magnetic needle, but would be lifeless and without magnetic motion. Nevertheless, though the river derives its very being from the fact that it seeks the ocean, and though the motion of the needle derives its very being from the fact that it seeks the pole, yet the stream is not the ocean and the motion of the needle is not the pole. The attractive power is made manifest and is felt in the motions which struggle towards it; and yet it is not itself those struggles, but is something far away beyond the distant horizon.

Eternity is the heavenly city towards which the pilgrims journey. The long procession passes on, drawn by an eager longing for that blest abode where at last each unit will find his appointed place and so will be at rest. The city waits to be peopled by the pilgrims and it has ample room for them all; nor otherwise would the endless procession be moving on its way. Nothing but desire for that distant home has drawn together the mighty train which passes onward with ceaseless eagerness: nothing but the same desire still keeps the procession in existence, and still draws it onward and ever onward without rest. And yet the

procession is not the city, even though at last those ample buildings should be peopled with all the pilgrims of whom the caravan consists.

So does the endless train of time move on towards that eternity in which each moment finds its true appointed place. And time exists and moves on towards its home solely because its home is there and time is drawn to seek it. And endless time is not eternity, though in eternity it longs to rest. There resting, it at last would cease, and, ceasing, would have thus fulfilled the purpose of its being.

Thus does Eternity attract into being the endless process of time. For Eternity is God, and God is Love, and Love can work in no other way than by its silent, still and sweet attraction.

And therefore time, which has no end and no beginning, is yet not eternity ; and therefore force, though it has existed from the first dawn of beginningless time, is yet not eternal. Temporal it is, though it fain would seek the eternal if it could but find it.

But a further problem yet remains and clamours for solution. We have escaped from one difficulty merely to run against another. For if brute force is not eternal, then it must depend for its existence upon God ; and that looks very much like saying that He is its ultimate origin. The pilgrim train of hours and moments presses on to reach eternity, and has been drawn into existence by desire for that final home of rest. And as it moves, it is laden with much baggage, for which the ample store-rooms are waiting ready in the great heavenly city. This baggage will never be allowed to enter the city walls—not at least until it has been cleansed and its disordered elements

rearranged. Nevertheless the bales were constructed and their contents were collected and prepared solely for the purpose of this journey, and solely because the store-rooms are waiting ready to receive them and to keep them safe for ever. Even so the brute forces of the world are borne onwards by the moving caravan of time; and, though brute force cannot possibly enter the heavenly Jerusalem until it has been purged and altered and changed into the opposite of force, yet it owes its very existence to the fact that the treasure-house lies ready to receive it should it ever lose its brutal nature. And therefore, just as time is attracted into being by eternity, so was brute force, from the first moment of time, attracted into being by the gentle goodness of God.

But, it will be urged, to say that a thing is attracted into being by God is merely another way of saying that it comes from Him. Brute force, then, comes from God and He is responsible for it. In other words, He is the ultimate fount of that which is bad. Good and evil then come from the same source and are therefore precisely the same thing. Moral distinctions utterly disappear and are compounded in one vast murky sea of pantheistic slime.

The problem is perhaps insoluble from the very nature of the case. We dwell within the sphere of this conditioned life, and are conversant with nothing but its concave surface. Sometimes, in rare and favoured moments, man may seem to mount beyond all earthly bounds and, in a blinding flash, to see the convex of the sphere; but even so all human thought and language can deal directly with nothing but the concave side. They can but show us that, correspond-

ing to the concave, the convex must exist ; but they cannot do more than vaguely hint at its nature. They can but say what it is not : they cannot accurately tell us what it is.

And yet with such poor weapons as human thought and language, the mind is driven by an imperious instinct to attempt the impossible task—is driven to direct its aim upon that problem which it cannot solve, and yet cannot ignore. Some random arrow it cannot but shoot forth out of its quiver. The shaft will never reach that target, which is set beyond all finite regions ; yet it is something if its feeble flight can suggest the direction in which the target lies.

The mark, then, is itself invisible. But near at hand is an object by which the archer can guide his aim with confidence, for he knows that somewhere the other side of it lies the hidden target. So plain this object is that it dominates the landscape ; and yet so strange in its mysterious loveliness that the eye cannot clearly grasp its fair and heavenly beauty. It is the conception of a divine omnipotence consisting in nothing else than helpless love. At this great fact the archer shoots his arrow. Let us go and see where it falls.

Since God is Love, and Love is harmony and peace and concord, therefore God utterly forbids all discord and all strife. But, because He forbids it, therefore it exists. It is the very nature of evil to rebel against God, even as it is the very nature of goodness to obey Him. And, therefore, just as all goodness exists because God wills that it should, even so all evil exists because He wills that it should not. That is what we mean by saying it is evil.

This, then, is its origin. It does not come from God ; and yet it would not be in the world but for the fact that beyond the world God exists. Evil is there not because God has created it, but precisely because He has refused to create it ; not because He allows it, but precisely because He does not allow it. Evil exists precisely because He commands it not to exist ; and thus it depends for its existence on His command and yet He is not its creator.

If His power consisted in force, He could not but annihilate the rebellious thing at once. But a power consisting in mere love cannot act that way. It issues its commands and these are disobeyed. What, then, is it to do ? There is but one course possible to its being and nature. It cannot crush the disobedience : it can but suffer it and wait and win its way by patience.

So, then, because God is Love and nothing else than love, and because Love eternally forbids brute force to exist, therefore throughout all time there has been brute force raging in ceaseless strife. And God has been powerless to destroy it, or to do ought else than endure it in the patience of eternal love. And hence arose the jarring forces in which the world began.

And as God, by enduring the brute force, has changed it into vital energy, He has not annihilated the evil, but has been gradually subduing it into good. And therefore all the goodness in the world, all the fair beauty and the life that streams through all things, represents an eternal act of God by which evil is not simply abolished, but rather is patiently suffered and thus is overcome. By being overcome it ceases to be evil, and is turned into the necessary condition

rendering possible that which is good. The brute forces are not destroyed: they are instead directed into common channels. And, in so far as they cease their conflicts, and move in one direction, they are changed from mere brute forces into an energy of life.

And far beyond the bounds of time exists in the Being of the Blessed Trinity the eternal home of all things. There God still forbids all evil; but there it exists only as that which His love, by suffering, has subdued. Evil is not annihilated, and yet it is in God no longer evil. In Him all suffering has been glorified into rapture, and the evil which he suffers is the condition of His perfect bliss and triumph. This is the mystery of the Cross, a mystery which lies at the centre of God's eternal Being.

In love, then, and in love alone is the explanation of all things. Love explains the mysterious Divine necessity that God should bear that discord which is contrary to His nature; and again (so far as any explanation of the inexplicable is possible) it is love that explains how the discord can in the nature of things exist.

And, in the conquest of the discord, love again is the key; for God conquers it by suffering it in love's unchanging patience. So He wins it into harmony and leads it on its upward way; so He turns the raging forces from their fierce internecine strife, and gives them one common direction and yokes them to His car. And in this work He operates by love's mysterious threefold way: He works as One Who, in His perfect love, desires that Self which is Not Self throughout the mighty process of creation.

CHAPTER V

EVOLUTION AND HUMAN PERSONALITY

THE position so far reached is this: God's power is nothing but love; and love must suffer contradiction or it is not love at all. Therefore God, in loving Himself with His unselfish love, must meet and suffer that brute force which is the opposite of love; and by suffering it, He gradually tames it and brings it out of discord into harmony, transmuting it, by His magic touch, out of evil into good. It does not change into something wholly good at once; but it is gradually refined as it slowly learns to obey His harmonising law. And from this process, wherever the jarring elements unite and join together and press on towards one common end, there springs that vital force which drives the universe along its path of development.

The next step is to take this vital force and see what light it throws on the meaning of the world. And the method to be followed lies clearly marked before us. We must judge the thing by its works if we are to gather what it is: we must ask whether it is tending, and what results it can produce.

I buy a packet of seeds at a florist's. They are minute dark objects of no great beauty, and do not in any special way strike the eye. Little bits of wood cut the right shape and stained the right colour

would look very much the same, and might, perhaps, pass for the reality. What, then, is the difference between the two cases? Why am I willing to give my money for the seeds while I would not give it readily for the chips of wood which resemble them so closely in appearance? It is because the seeds have within them a hidden power which the chips of wood have not. I value the seeds, not for what they actually are at present, not as dark objects of a certain shape and size, but for what they can produce and for what they may become. I value them because I know that, if I sow them in the ground, from them will come a plant and from the plant a flower; and thus, looking forward to the future, from the very beginning I foresee the end.

The seed is sown and it begins to grow, putting forth a tender shoot which just emerges from the soil. It was not, then, a mere tiny dark object, for it contained the latent shoot; and in this fact it gains a fresh value. But the process does not stop there. The shoot grows upwards and expands; and, bursting into leaf, becomes a full-grown plant. The thing, then, was not a mere tiny shoot, but had within it the power of reaching this further result. And in this fact both the shoot itself and the seed, from which it springs, have their value yet enhanced. And their value is just this—that without them there would have been no plant. But, once again, this is not the end. The plant matures and puts forth its hidden forces; and, by the operation of these, it bears a lovely flower. And now the seed and the shoot and the growing plant have a greater value still; for they are to me the links in a

golden chain of development. The shoot is a more wonderful thing than the seed; the maturing plant again is a more wonderful thing than the shoot; and more wonderful still is the perfect flower with which the process has at last been crowned. And therefore shoot and plant are valued by me for this reason, that they lead on from the tiny seed to this glorious consummation.

Just so it is in the whole process of the world. We look at the vast scheme and ask: What is its value? And first we see mere inorganic nature, blind and unconscious. Then we find, in grass and bloom and shrub and tree, organic life arising on its surface; and this is a more wonderful thing than inorganic nature, for there is here a power of life, of growth, and of expansion. Then we see, above the vegetable kingdom, in the insect and the bird and beast, the animal kingdom springing into being; and here is a far more wonderful thing than any plant in the world. For the animal, be it insect, bird or beast, has not only a power of life and growth and expansion, but is also in some degree conscious and endowed with the power of sensation and of originating motion. And often too the animal shows, in the maternal instinct of self-sacrifice for its young, a gleam of some higher quality still—even the first faint streaks which seem to speak of a heavenly dawn at hand.

That dawn at last begins to break in all its glory when the human race appears. Here we find something which possesses, like the plant and tree, a life and power of growth, possesses, like the animal, conscious feeling and power of motion, and possesses also some yet further faculty. In man the conscience, intellect and will,

which slumbered in the bird and beast and reptile and insect, though often striving in different degrees to awake in them to life, arise from this dull torpor to a fuller consciousness ; and therefore man is the most marvellous of all things that exist upon this earth. If inorganic matter is the seed of the great creative process, if vegetable life is the tender shoot and animal life the maturing plant, then man is the final flower and fruit which crowns and completes the whole. Therefore in him is to be sought the answer to the riddle of the world ; since, with all his magnificent powers of heart and mind and will, he imparts a new value to the process as a whole and also to each and every portion. If we ask what is the value of the vital force in the world, the answer is just this : The vital force is that which has succeeded in the production of the human race. If we ask what is the value of the vegetable and the animal kingdoms, with all their multitudinous progeny thronging the surface of the globe, the answer is the same : into all and each of these we can read a wonderful purpose when we see that they have issued finally in the production of mankind. They are links in the chain, milestones on the road, stages in that growth and development which have finally led to the production of this most glorious being as their conclusion, their goal and their completion. From the inorganic world, through the plant and through the brute, the vital force is pressing on ; and as it still advances it awakes into life and consciousness. Finally it reaches the human race, and, when this point has been attained, the life is fuller and richer, the consciousness more wide awake. In man the latent forces of the universe have come more

fully to their own. This godlike being, therefore, with all his rich endowment, gives the whole process of the universe a meaning which it never possessed before.

This truth may be illustrated from various points of view ; and many sciences combine to support it with their testimony. But one example will suffice, as being among the clearest and most convincing. It comes from the science of embryology. The following words of a distinguished student are a simple statement of the facts :—

“ Like that of all other organisms, unicellular or multicellular, [man’s] development starts from the nucleus of a single cell. Again, like that of the Metazoa and Metaphyta, his development starts from the specially elaborated nucleus of an egg-cell, or a nucleus which has been formed by the fusion of a male with a female element. When his animality becomes established, he exhibits the fundamental anatomical qualities which characterise such lowly animals as polyps and jelly-fish. And even when he is marked off as a vertebrate, it cannot be said whether he is to be a fish, a reptile, a bird, or a beast. Later on it becomes evident that he is to be a mammal ; but not till later still can it be said to which order of mammals he belongs. . . . It is not [however] true that the embryonic phase in the development of a higher form always resembles so many adult stages of lower forms. This may or may not be the case ; but what always is the case is, that the embryonic phases of the higher form resemble the corresponding phases of the lower forms. Thus, for example, it would be wrong to suppose that at any stage of his development a man resembles a jelly-fish. What he

does resemble at an early stage of his development is the essential or ground plan of the jelly-fish, which that animal presents in *its* embryonic condition, or before it begins to assume its more specialised characters fitting it for its own particular sphere of life."¹

Such, then, are the facts. Now for the interpretation thereof.

There start over the wild and desolate waste a mighty company intent on some hidden quest. None knows the nature of the impulse that drives him on, and yet obey it he must. A vague imperious restlessness works deep within his being: something he seeks, he cannot tell what. A spirit of adventure somewhere stirs within him which will not let him rest, but spurring him on with the sting of that strange desire, ceaselessly urges him forth upon his way. Onward, then, he hastens through the wild and rugged country seeking for some unknown promised land which lies far away beyond the distant mountains.

So the great host presses on its journey, driven forward by vague yearning. And, as it advances, it comes to many a crossway which branches off on this side or on that; where some of the company take one path and some happen to take another, each turning down that particular one which chances to be nearest. And those that find themselves upon one of the branching byways can still for a while advance along it towards the unknown promised land; but, though they can go some distance, they cannot go very far. For none of those byways reaches that distant goal. Some go farther towards it than others, but,

¹ Romanes, *Darwin and after Darwin*, vol. i. p. 119.

sooner or later, all of them stop short; and some may even, with sinuous meanderings, lead gradually away from the promised land towards the point from which the journey began. But whatever the final direction taken by the branching paths, whether or not they keep more or less turned towards that far country, all alike come sooner or later to an end, and are lost in the surrounding wilds or run up against some mountain barrier which no traveller can climb. And thus the many who have, in their haste and blindness, rushed into one or another of these bypaths, come sooner or later to a point where they can go no farther. Their journey is cut short and they cannot reach the longed-for home.

Thus, in course of time, out of that goodly company all have disappeared and lost their way but one. And this one still presses forward along the narrow central track. He is not wiser than the rest, nor has he been directly guided by any power outside him: he is merely more fortunate in the position he has occupied. His fellow-travellers by their position happened to strike this by-path or that: he happened to be in the middle of the road and so the by-paths escaped his notice. Therefore he presses on, by his good fortune the sole survivor of the host, through the encroaching wilderness, over the perilous mountain-pass, and finally, by this straight and narrow way, he reaches the promised abode.

That mighty company represents the sum total of organic life; and the distant home towards which they are blindly pressing is developed personal being. Onward they move, and, as the process advances, they tend and struggle to become more complex, more

personal, more conscious. But the various species of vegetable or animal life have all at different times, some sooner and some farther on, during the journey, left the main track and taken one of the branching paths. Along these they have still continued to develop and, in many cases, to come nearer and nearer to the goal of personality. And thus each step in their advance has corresponded to a step in the more fortunate traveller's journey ; and they have at each stage of their progress been as near to the distant goal as he has been at the corresponding stage of his path. Some of the higher animals have, thus, as fully developed a personality as may be found in very little children ; but none of the other species besides man has attained to a mature condition of personal being. All have been checked and hindered ; all, however far they may have progressed, have at last reached a point where they could go no farther : while man alone has succeeded in becoming, more or less, fully conscious and personal.

Such is the conception which would explain the facts of embryology. For the life-history of each individual is an epitome setting forth in brief that which has been, through many ages, the life-history of the kind. If at an early stage in its development the human embryo resembles that of a jelly-fish at the same stage of development, it must be because, up to that point, the two species have traversed the same ground. And at the point where the differences begin to appear the jelly-fish has turned aside from the main path of advance. It has gone its own way, moving a little distance, perhaps, towards the goal of personal being, but soon being stopped by an impass-

able barrier. And the same result emerges if man be compared with all the other species in the universe. Every creature, of whatever kind, embodies, at an arrested stage of development, the great principle of personality.

Here, then, is the magic clue which leads through the labyrinth of nature. Here is the mystic beacon which sheds its rays on the surrounding darkness. By the light of this great principle, and by it alone, a meaning can be read into the whole process of the universe.

This mighty process represents before our eyes a strange and mysterious awakening. Out of the slumber of unconsciousness there gradually arises a hidden principle. The sleeper awakes and rises from his torpor. The night is past: the dawning day streams in upon his pillow. He opens his eyes to look upon the light. Slowly he becomes conscious of himself and his surroundings. His dormant powers are now quickened into action. He begins to feel, to think, to know, to will. No longer is there now an insensate "thing": the "thing" has become a person.

Such, then, is the process of the world: First the mechanical motions of the material fabric driven in blind obedience by an iron law; then the plants in which the law has become an inner principle of life causing activities due to the reaction of the organism on its environment; then the animal in which there goes along with this power of reaction an ever-growing element of sensation and hence of consciousness. And finally comes man, in whom the consciousness is more fully self-conscious and is able to explain its own activities.

Thus does the vital force, which informs the world with ceaseless energy, press on and ever onward towards its goal; thus does it meet with countless obstacles which split the stream, diverting it now this way and now that: and yet relentlessly the central flood bears on, and finally frets out one narrow channel by which it bursts between the frowning mountains into that far lake towards which it has been struggling. And in that inland sea its waters can collect together, and there are stored and there they can become a deep and mighty reservoir of inward spiritual life, disturbed indeed and tossed full often by the mountain storms, or by strong hidden currents which struggle beneath the surface, yet often again reflecting on its calm unruffled bosom the peaceful azure of that eternal heaven which broods upon the face of all things; and always, even in storm and tempest, capable of untroubled peace somewhere in those mysterious depths which lie beyond the reach of any finite plummet—a lake hemmed in by earthly mountains and taking from them its form and even its very existence, and yet akin to that vast ocean of Being which lies beyond the narrow encircling chain.

Here, then, the stream is held, yet here it does not cease to act; but in those hidden depths it moves by subterranean ways for ever towards the silent sea; and thus must filter down until its muddy turbulence is all at last transformed into the clear stillness of eternal peace. For nothing short of infinite Being is the ultimate goal towards which the vital impulse tends; and at infinity all things are changed into the very opposite of their present finite nature. And, therefore, as diverging lines, though sundered more

and more while journeying through space, must, at the infinity they seek, unite in one ; or, as a fire, being blown into an ever-reddening glow, at last loses all its earthly hue in a pure dazzling whiteness of celestial flame ; even so the mighty life which fills this finite world, though struggling to become a stronger and a stronger force, **must** yet, could it but reach the infinite goal beyond, be by its very intensity transfigured into a holy silence where force exists no more.

Now to the mind and heart of man there are vouchsafed, even on this earth, some visitations of that Infinite Being towards which the whole world presses. Man, while hemmed in by space and time, can yet at favoured moments feel the Infinite and the Eternal as a Presence in his soul. Therefore he can, by blinding visitations, obtain a glimpse of this marvellous paradox. The vital force that burns in man's heart and brain can sometimes for an instant flash far out beyond all finite bounds, and in that instant feel itself to be no longer a mere force, but stillness, meekness, love. At such a moment of rapturous vision the force which moves the world has come full circle and is at last made perfect by being no more itself.

Throughout the world there runs, then, one deep mysterious principle ; and this principle is that of conscious personality. In the lower animals it is present, but stunted and checked in its growth : in man it finally attains a fuller stature, and in him its development is more complete and perfect. And by this conception much light is thrown, not only on the world-process as a whole, but also on each unit and each creature when regarded by itself. Not only does the total process gain fresh value from the fact that it leads on

to this most marvellous being, but each individual creature shines with the same reflected glory and draws from man a new value which it possesses in itself. The dog, the horse, the very swine, has now a value all its own, is now (as St. Francis or William Blake saw all earthly creatures) a thing mysterious and almost holy as enshrining in its being somewhere this hidden principle. If the lower animals possess the rudiments of personality, then who can tell but what they may, some of them at least, have before them a glorious future career? The principle of personality is in them, and their bodies are the means by which it can act. But though the body of the animal so far helps this inner power, it helps it only up to a certain point; and beyond that point it will not allow it to expand. The vessel is necessary to hold the sacred wine, which otherwise would be spilt upon the ground; and thus, to the extent of its capacity, it performs a useful work: but, while it saves those precious essences from being wholly lost, it is also a limit and a check which will not let them collect beyond a certain level. And so the streams pour from the vat upon it, but all in vain; when once the vessel is full, it can hold no more. But, when it has been broken by the hand of death, why should not the heavenly fluid, which was seeking in vain to enter it, be gathered up in some more capacious vessel? Why should not that principle of personality which, during the animal's life upon this earth, was checked and hindered by the body that contained it, find in some other world new possibilities of growth, and attain at last the final goal of completed personal being?

Even in man this principle of personality is to some degree hindered by that body which it needs as its dwelling and its organ. In man there are hidden powers which cannot find a perfect self-fulfilment ; and he in whom they have attained the largest measure is hailed with awe and astonishment as a genius, a prophet or a saint. And such an one is an earnest and a token to all his fellow-men of what they too may at last become. In this life they are hindered and hampered, and so, too, is he, though not so much as they. But, from the knowledge that these powers are latent in mankind, comes a strong hope and conviction that they will one day be developed.

An infant dying soon after his birth has an immortal soul ; and yet the personal principle within him is dormant and not fulfilled. His personality is there but it has not been able to grow. But it will grow, if Christianity means anything, and will develop in another world. Why then should not the same be true of every bird and of every beast on earth ?

Again, one richly endowed with noble gifts of character and intellect meets, on the threshold of his manhood ; with a railway accident. His brain is injured beyond all hope of remedy, and he becomes a helpless imbecile. It is as if iron clamps had now been put upon that growing character to crush its powers into one narrow circle beyond which they must not pass : the injured organ contracts them and will not let them expand. Yet, is that glorious promise entirely lost ? Is it not still an earnest of its own fulfilment in another world ? Do we not rightly feel that such splendid powers, though crushed and hampered here, cannot, by their very nature, be destroyed, but must

by their own inner eternal vitality, one day, when, in another world, they find the opportunity, expand and so fulfil themselves? Just such as this is the condition of each animal. Just as the personality of the imbecile is checked and hindered in its growth by a defective brain, even so is that of the animal hindered in a somewhat similar way. And therefore, if the shackles which chance and fate have imposed should, in some future world, be struck off and flung aside, why should not that personal principle, which is held as in a prison, rise and expand in freedom and the animal become a grand and glorious thing? Only such a thought as this explains that friendship which is possible between mankind and some of the dumb creation. A real affection and fellowship is possible between a man and a dog; and a faithful dog is capable of setting mankind a noble example of devotion. This strange mysterious fellowship between man and the brute is not a degrading thing, but has an exalted value. It is strongest generally in the best and highest characters: in none was it stronger than in St. Francis. It points to a mysterious kinship, and ennobles both man and brute. It suggests that the lower animals are heirs with us of that same unknown destiny which we struggle to fulfil.

The conception, then, approves itself both to the reason and to the conscience. And all our best natural instincts point in the same direction. It is a duty, recognised by all good men, to be kind to animals; and, if this is so, then the animals have rights of their own. I must not ill-treat a horse or a dog for my own convenience or amusement. He has his own claims and feelings, and these I ought to respect: he has a right to demand that I do not inflict unnecessary

suffering on him. But if he has this right, then he has a rudimentary personality. For he is asking me to treat him not as a mere means to an end, but also, partly, as an end in himself. And therefore, if I must be kind to animals, it can only be because animals are, to some extent, persons.

On the other hand, where necessary, the animal's rights must be sacrificed to the higher claims of man. The animal may be enslaved for human toil, or killed for human food, and to that extent it may be treated as a means to an end, which end is the welfare of mankind. And the reason it may be sacrificed in this way is that, though its personality has reached to a certain point, yet it cannot go beyond it. The animal cannot develop so as to gain an articulate consciousness; and to that extent it is not personal, but is a thing without rights of its own.

And this conception of the matter, derived first from evolution and then supported by the moral consciousness, appears to be in harmony with the teaching of Christ. For, on the one hand, He had for all the dumb creation a tender sympathy which appears more than once in His words. When He rebuked the Jews for condemning a work of healing which He performed on the Sabbath Day, the point of His rebuke was this: No man, with human feelings, would leave an ox or an ass or a sheep to suffer if it had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath; and, if so, then it was far more cruel to leave a fellow human being to suffer in the same way.¹ The argument implies that the human being is a far more precious thing than the dumb animal, and yet that there is a kinship between the two. The instinct

¹ St. Matthew xii. 11, 12; St. Luke xiv. 5; cf. St. Luke xiii. 15, 16.

of humanity should welcome a deed of kindness done to a woman on the Sabbath Day, and it is the same instinct of humanity that must prompt a man who is worthy of the name to relieve the sufferings of the brute creation.

Yet clearer is this thought when the Lord says that not one sparrow falls to the ground without the Heavenly Father.¹ Men are of greater worth than sparrows, but the sparrows too are precious in the sight of God, who cares in His loving-kindness for all the fowls of the air.

The sympathy with which Christ looks at the free and joyous life of the birds He shows on another occasion when He speaks not in joy but in grief: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!”² Words such as these display a gracious and kind sympathy for that touching instinct of maternal love which is found in most dumb animals. They point to a secret bond of kinship between the animal and man—nay, for He Who spoke the words was God Himself, a kinship between the animal and God.

On the other hand, while Christ teaches that each animal is a precious thing with wonderful hidden powers, yet He shows with equal plainness that its rights must give way to those of man. His followers ate animal flesh; and He Himself must have done so, for He celebrated the Passover. Many of the disciples were fishermen, and He twice aided their fishing by

¹ St. Matthew x. 29; St. Luke xii. 6; St. Matthew vi. 26.

² St. Luke xiii. 34.

His miraculous knowledge. He was ready on another occasion to sacrifice a whole herd of swine for the cure of a demoniac, and as a rebuke to the owners for their callous indifference to the condition of the degraded man in their midst. And even, as was seen, when He draws a lesson of humanity to man from the instinct of humanity to animals, or passes from God's love for the birds to His greater love for man, there is this same thought not only implied but actually expressed : How much more precious is a man than a dumb animal.

And these two sides of the Lord's teaching are fulfilled by one theory alone—the theory that each animal is a person at an arrested stage of development.

Into his own heart man must look if he would find the secret of the universe : there, and there only, will he discover that which will give a meaning to the mighty whole. Deep woven in the very fabric of his being he finds a moral law : deep within its hidden recesses he hears the still small voice of conscience. There is within him a power that witnesses to higher things. It does not argue : it commands ; and he must obey its dictates. It bears its own testimony to itself in the very nature of its claim, a testimony which none may ignore ; and the more man's moral stature grows and brings with it a widened experience and a clearer vision of the truth, the more does he feel and know within his being that this ultimate moral law exists, and that it is, in its very essence, absolute :—

“It lives, and no one knows from whence it came.”

And in this absolute moral law, which man gradually learns to see with greater and yet greater clearness,

is to be found, just because it is absolute, the clue to the meaning of the world. No man can consistently and honestly seek to obey it without feeling at once that he is in the presence of the great Reality. And feeling this, he will learn to see that, if the world possesses any purpose, it is to be sought in this great fact of his experience.

The whole world, then, must be explained in terms of moral good and evil. Either that, or else it has no meaning at all : either that, or it is mere chaos.

But only a person can be morally good. Hence it is plain that the universe can be explained in no other terms than those of personality. And, since in man we find the personal principle first attaining a fuller development and seeking to come into its own rich heritage, in man is to be sought the key to the whole vast riddle. From stage to stage the process of the world passes on the sacred torch, which smoulders first in the lowest forms of life ; then in the higher forms begins feebly to glow ; until the glowing end, fanned by the breeze of heaven, displays a brighter and a brighter redness ; at length beginning to shoot out premonitory sparks ; and finally blazing forth in man with a flame that mounts upon the quickening wind and throws its light, not only upon the holder, but also on the whole enormous chain of those whose humble task it has been to pass it on from hand to hand and give it at last to man. And from this fact spring both the capabilities and also the limitations of the lower kinds—their capabilities, for they can hold the torch, and its glowing end may in their hands one day be fanned into a flame : their limitations, for their great task has been, not to keep the torch themselves, but to hand it on to the human race.

No matter though, as they press on up the perilous mountain path to bring the torch to man, each tramples his fellows in his blind eagerness or jostles them over the precipice. No matter though man himself, towards whom they have been struggling upwards, cannot turn upon the slippery verge of that dizzy eminence without spurning them by thousands into the gulf of death. One day those shattered forms of life will be refashioned according to a better pattern. One day they will receive back from his hand, enkindled from a smouldering glow to an intense and a celestial flame, that torch which man, holding it in trust for the whole creation, uplifts to the fostering winds of heaven.

Therefore, in being sacrificed for man, they are but being sacrificed for their own true good. For all we know, those abounding powers which come from the Cross of Christ to all mankind may pass through man and beyond him and may quicken with their influence the dumb animal creation. The precious torch which they have handed on has at last been kindled into the flame of personal being : and that flame has been by Christ made eternal and divine ; and thus, ennobled and endued with mystic heavenly glory, has been by Him given back into the hands of the human race from which He took it. Who knows but what it is to pass through them in turn to all the lower orders of the creation, that they too may possess as their own its heavenly treasure ? It is not therefore selfish for man to sacrifice the lower animals for his needs. The one imperative thing is that he should live and expand, so that he may be able to put forth his godlike powers. For by each noble thought and deed, by each unselfish act which develops his human character, he

is storing up a mighty reservoir of good ; and from this reservoir, we may well believe, each form of sentient life, however humble, will one day draw the strength by which its own hidden personal powers may grow to their maturity.

In this great hope the whole creation groaneth and travaleth together until now, sharing the tribulation of those immortal beings who groan within themselves awaiting the adoption, to wit the redemption of their bodies. This is the earnest expectation of the creature which awaiteth the revelation of the sons of God. Even in this hope it yearns for that glad day when it shall be freed from the bondage of corruption and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.¹

So St. Paul trusted, inspired by the Holy Ghost. So, guided by that light from heaven which burned within his heart, he pressed on, driven by deep unutterable longings of the soul, and through the dim and baffling shades of night reached forth his hand and touched a hope beyond. So he suggests, though scarce, perhaps, conscious of the meaning of his words, that every form of life will one day have the power of sharing in God's great final consummation. And so we may believe, in accordance with the spirit of his language, that each unit of the animal world will bask in that genial warmth, and, with its hidden powers thus quickened into energy and life, will awake from its cold torpor, and, thus arising, will at last spring upward with untrammelled course to unimaginable heights of being.

Thus, then, the whole grand scheme coheres. One power and life, pressing continuously on to fuller con-

¹ Romans viii. 22.

sciousness works in the material fabric of the world, then in the vegetable and animal spheres, and finally reaches its highest development in man. That life is the energy of the Eternal Word, through Whom all things are made.

And through the whole creative process He works in one and the self-same way. At each fresh point He wins His victory by His patient endurance: at each His method is not violence but persuasion, and consists in nothing else than His being what He is.

By this Divine method the elements are subdued and are won into conformity with the law of harmony, being drawn from discord into concord simply through the fact that all such combinations as agree with the underlying principle of Reason possess thereby an inherent permanence. And thus it is solely by being what He is that the Word of God has fashioned the material fabric of the world. And when we trace the gradual advance up the scale of evolution, the same great fact appears. Out of the clash and struggle of kind with kind the vegetable and the animal kingdoms have been gradually formed by that same gentle method. Here again has the persuasive influence of that same patient Goodness acted by giving permanence to such forms alone as have proved themselves to be capable of adaptation into an ordered scheme. Thus has a gradual advance been made up to a higher level, until at last the process has culminated in man. And here once more the same great principle has been at work. Art, morality, religion itself, and all that is noblest in human life, has gradually gained its position in the same astounding way, owing its permanence to its inherent goodness, which is there

in spite of all abuses. For just as the various grades of organic life have gradually settled into permanent shape from amidst the shifting motions of conflicting and transitory elements, even so the whole system of human civilisation is, as it were, a deposit which has gradually formed itself from amidst the surging waves of history.

There is throughout the world a great unifying tendency which, ever silently, patiently, slowly at work, strives first in its own unobtrusive way to bring the discordant chaos of the natural world into one harmonious concord, then strives again in human history by the same quiet means and to the same great end. Human law arises from a sort of haphazard compromise, being based at first, in large measure, on the crude principle that might is right. Yet from this unpromising beginning it is being gradually won upwards to a higher ideal by the inherent loveliness of that ideal itself; and ever it seeks, in the higher civilised races, though with many a hindrance, to approximate to that great law which consists in perfect love.

So it is that human history begins as a mere struggle for existence, and men form themselves into societies that they may be able to survive in the all-absorbing contest. But from this crude commencement there gradually begins to arise a higher ideal of the true meaning of human fellowship; and, thus arising, it labours, in spite of constant defeat, to overcome all obstacles and realise its own fulfilment.

That ideal will never be attained completely in this world. We cannot even say that there will be a steady and continued advance towards it; for the hidden forces

of human character are beyond all calculation. On the whole the human race has been, through countless centuries, painfully struggling towards greater moral heights ; but, for all we know, it may, in times to come, decline once more and gradually sink from the point it has so far attained. We do not know what the future has in store : we can but hope and strive and pray and possess our souls in patience. The ascent is steep and rugged, and mankind may grow weary of the labour. Even now there are signs, too obvious, that men are ceasing from strenuous moral effort and expect to dwell at ease on the heights which the struggles of long ages have bequeathed to them. They know not that the whole mountain side is formed of shifting scree and shale, which ever moves with growing impetus towards those dark depths which lie below, bearing downwards with resistless force each one who will not always fight and strive to climb the slippery and painful ascent.

Evolution has no certain message of encouragement for the human race. It says that man may possibly continue to become a nobler and a better being : it does not say that he necessarily will. Yet in the soul of man there resides a hidden hope. Knowing what he knows within his being, the Christian may dare to be, if not a careless optimist, yet at least no pessimist. He has learnt the one and absolute source whence can be obtained by man his perfect satisfaction ; and in this sure knowledge he sits at the centre of all things, possessing as his own the secret of the universe. Peace and rest for the human heart can be found in nothing but in God, and in an absolute obedience to His eternal and ideal law. And therefore none who has ever felt,

however faintly, the beauty of that mysterious ideal can ever quite forget it and be as if the vision had never been vouchsafed. All who have ever caught a glimpse of it cannot but be stirred uneasily even in spite of themselves, and must be vaguely drawn towards it by its very loveliness and peace. The human heart is made that way and cannot entirely lose its own true nature ; at least, it cannot lose it except by its own deliberate choice. And therefore nothing but the wilful obstinacy of man could, in the final issue, prevent the complete realisation, in some future world, of the great heavenly kingdom.

And so far as any individual man feels the attraction of the heavenly ideal, and, feeling it, responds to its call, so far as he is drawn towards high and noble things, loving them for no hope of reward, but simply because of what they are, so far as he patiently turns his face towards the light and seeks to attain but to one glimpse of that celestial vision, to that extent does he give a Divine meaning and purpose to his own individual life, and to that of his brother man ; nor does this blessed brightness rest only upon the human race, but it strikes with heavenly glory on the whole vast process of evolution, and on every stage and every unit of the struggling and suffering creation.

CHAPTER VI

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

THUS far, then, has the journey led over the arid wilderness. As the eye dwelt on the clash of forces and saw through the whole creative process carnage and strife and death, the prospect was one which at first could give but little pleasure. It seemed a barren desert, monotonous and wearisome, with no promise of any pleasant country beyond its margin for the traveller who should seek to cross its burning sands. The whole world appeared as one great pathless waste of chaotic strife and purposeless destruction, which, far as the eye could reach, stretched on to the distant horizon. Why seek, then, to attempt the hopeless journey? What home would ever be discovered across that dreary expanse? No heavenly land was waiting to be found beyond its limits. The traveller who had the hardihood to make the vain attempt was but doomed to wander at random and to lose himself inevitably in the vast and barren wilds.

Such was the first thought that came into the mind at the prospect of that howling wilderness. But then there arose in the heart a sudden hope. A track was seen stretching across the sand, faint and indefinite at first, so faint that it did not strike the eye, but ever, in its course, gathering clearness and direction until it seemed at last to become a beaten path, leading

onwards to the far horizon. That track was the vital impulse which at last came into view stretching out over the struggle of the elements, and appearing to lead on towards some distant and invisible bourne.

This path the traveller begins to follow. And, as he advances, he finds, on each side, that it seems to lead off in one direction or another, where various branching tracks have been worn on the sands of the world by the feet of countless different species. But the traveller keeps to the one central path which he can discern with moderate ease, going on towards its goal. And he is now guided in his progress by a welcome sight which greets him from the distance. Far off he sees, beyond the desert's utmost margin, a fair and lovely land with trees and rich green pastures and the promise of refreshing water.

Cheered by the sight, he presses on with good courage and high hopes. The path which he is treading leads towards that pleasant prospect and promises to lead him to the fair abode of peace, where he may rest and, in its sheltering glades at last, may feel that his journey was not all in vain. So on he hastens with tremulous eagerness, looking forward to the rich reward of all his labours. The track he treads is plainer and plainer to the eye: the pleasant land grows nearer and yet nearer: a few more steps and he will be there: he rushes forward to cast himself upon the grass and drink those refreshing waters,—and the scene vanishes. A mere mirage it was that had mocked him with its promise—an unsubstantial dream that melts as he seeks to touch it. The vision of beauty has disappeared and leaves him weary and sick at heart. His hopes are

gone, he gives up the fruitless struggle and, in his rude disillusionment, he flings himself down to die.

Such must be the feelings of many a one who seeks to read the riddle of the universe. Strong in the thought of man's innate nobility, he has pressed on over the desert. Strife and confusion, indeed, fill entire vast spaces of the world ; yet, if there is over that barren waste a path that leads to this most glorious end, he can read a purpose where before he could find none. In man with his grand endowment will be found a solution of the whole terrific problem. The desert that leads beyond its borders to so glorious a being is not mere desert after all. He can brave its terrors with dauntless confidence, and can march triumphant over its burning sands. When he has reached the distant goal he will see that his toilsome journey was well worth the unceasing effort. In human personality is to be found the one great answer to all the perplexing problems of the universe. Filled with this conviction he can dare, in spite of the facts which he sees in the natural world, to believe that the whole great process means intensely and means well.

But then, as he comes to consider this very fact of human personality in the world, his faith is doomed to suffer a terrific shock. Man's whole spiritual life is infected deep with sin, and he is himself the one most terrible problem of all. The crimes of the human race, crimes committed every day during the whole course of its tragic history, present a ghastly spectacle which might well drive any man to despair. And even in the noblest and best of mankind, the martyr and the hero and the saint, there has been lurking somewhere this same principle of evil marring the fair beauty

of the splendid work and striving to drag the rising spirit down to utter depths of degradation. The saintliest of all mankind, on looking into their own hearts, have found working within them a power of evil which has filled them with horror and self-loathing ; indeed, it is the greatest saints who have felt themselves to be the chief of sinners. Their language may seem exaggerated and unreal to us ordinary mortals ; but of one thing we may be certain : the saints of God know more than we, and they are wholly sincere. If they call themselves sinners then they mean it, and if they mean it they are right. No man, even the best, is perfect ; and to one who lives in constant sight of the great and perfect ideal all imperfection is a galling bondage bitter and hard to be borne. We men of common mould are content to be as we are because our ideal is low and we have not seen the truth except in fitful gleams. The saints gaze steadily upon it, and by its light they look into themselves and see there imperfections which only that perfect radiance can reveal.

All mankind, then, are sinful ; and therefore no man upon earth, nor yet the whole human race together, can be a final and complete explanation of the evolutionary process. Suggestions here and there, and in fact on almost every side, they give, now dim, now clear, and in some few, the great souls of the world, shining forth with a startling plainness that hints beyond a shadow of doubt at some great Perfection beyond them ; but, though they may suggest the Ideal, and though they may hint at it in a way that there is no mistaking, yet the fact remains that not one is the ideal and that not one is perfect. And therefore in

man, even at his best and highest, is to be found no final explanation of the world ; at his best he is but a hint and a suggestion that a final explanation does somewhere exist.

And on the other hand, what a fearful spectacle meets the eye. No man with a human heart can read of the cruelties inflicted by man upon his brother man and not turn sick with loathing. None can realise, however dimly, some of the foul deeds which have polluted this earth, and still continue to pollute it for all our boasted progress, without being crushed beneath the intolerable load and driven wandering, bereft of all repose and light, amid the dark mazes of a hideous nightmare.

This is the great and overwhelming tragedy of the whole creation. This it is that may well unnerve the hand and suck the hope and gladness from the heart. This it is that deals a staggering blow to all man's rising hopes.

Terrible as is the prospect of the natural world groaning under its load of torment and filling the waste void with the shrieks of its carnage and reeking slaughter, fearful as it is to reflect on the cruelties, often the refined cruelties, practised by one kind upon another in this internecine strife, ghastly as is the thought of the palpitating horror that throbs beneath the fair and peaceful surface of all Nature's mighty process, yet if man were perfect it would be possible in no selfish spirit to say that all is well. If, but for these things, that glorious product, human perfection, could not have come into being, then the agony is indeed worth while. This we may say in complete unselfishness and, in saying it, ennable the whole of the dumb,

suffering creation. The poor worm which writhes in the beak of the thrush, the deer that, paralysed with terror, feels its life-blood being sucked from its quivering body by the pitiless jaws of the tiger, the field-mouse that, impaled alive on a thorn by the shrike, awaits its dreadful death through days of starvation and torture, would all alike, if they could see and realise the wondrous glory of that being who crowns the whole great process, endure their sufferings willingly and gladly, feeling it a privilege if in some strange way their pangs are needful that so the great result may at last be reached—feeling it a privilege and looking forward to the day when they shall be partakers of the benefits which this great consummation must bring. Therefore, if man were perfect, we might dare unselfishly to accept the natural world and to regard it not with deep disgust and horror, but with a passionate and triumphant hope.

And in the same spirit, though the tongue must falter and the words of affirmation will scarce come to the lips, we could accept the yet more horrible fact of human suffering and still retain this faith. Though by the earthquake and the tempest and the fury of the raging elements, or by the brazen hand of pestilence and famine, mankind be torn and roasted and hurtled in helpless thousands to hideous deaths of agony; though man treads the stony path of this painful life with tortured frame and bleeding feet; though he is caught in the cogs of pitiless fate which, grinding on by iron law, crushes him in its wheels of anguish; yet we may dare, even though it needs courageous daring, to say with resolute conviction that all is well. If man must needs endure these countless pangs, and if

only thus can he show his own true grandeur, then let them come. The greatness and the majesty of the human soul, if it can but reach its own perfection, are infinite : they can conquer every form of physical pain, and can, by their own sheer patient power, fashion out of the weltering chaos of strife and agony a grand and enduring temple of ideal beauty.

So could we dare to say if man were perfect ; so could we say if he fulfilled his own fair promise. But the facts of life strike the words dumb upon our lips. We cannot look at human life and dare with confidence to make that great affirmation.

With infinite creaking and groaning, with labour and much friction, the world, like some ill-made, ill-managed machine, struggles to produce its great result. Finally, it attains its purpose, and there springs forth—a failure.

The existence of sin in the world is, then, the one great problem of all problems. It is, in fact, the acutest form of the enormous problem of evil. This problem is so vast that no thinking man can ignore it. Philosophies formed in the comfortable seclusion of the study or the lecture-room try to explain it away : religion, in its highest forms, faces and seeks to conquer it, and deserves our reverence and homage precisely in so far as it succeeds.

The explanation of human sin which the Church has traditionally held is as follows : Man was created pure ; but by his own free will he fell, and, falling, brought corruption into the world.

This tradition of the Fall has, during an honoured career of many centuries, performed an educational work which deserves our lasting gratitude. But the Middle Ages have now passed away ; and the atmo-

sphere of modern science is fraught with keen and biting winds which are trying to any but the most vigorous physique. It is hard for men to bid farewell to an old and valued teacher, and our sympathies must go out towards those who cannot believe that the end is come; but it would be hypocrisy for the present writer to express any personal regret, or to hint that he imagines there is the least chance of recovery. In fact there would be a frivolous profanity in such a cheerful suggestion coming from one who is convinced that the patient is not merely dying, but is actually dead. Therefore, instead of indulging in any illusive hopes, let us see if the stethoscope and an anatomical diagram will make the matter plain.

What, then, in the first place is evil? To this question various answers have been given; but perhaps the only definition which will be found to fit everything that the natural instinct of man pronounces to be bad, is that it consists in a discord. Pain is evil because it is a discord between the body or the mind and its surroundings. I have a toothache, for instance, and this is due to the fact that the nerve is exposed and the cold air strikes upon it. There is a want of harmony between the nerve and the surrounding air; and the feeling of this discord is the pain. Or I am in trouble of mind, and this is because I have received bad news. I have, perhaps, failed in a cherished undertaking. Success was the element in which my mind expected to live, instead of which there is failure; and failure is an uncongenial element. Thus my mind is at war with its surroundings. And the sense of this fact is mental pain.

Again, I see a picture and pronounce it bad. This

is because the lines are out of drawing and do not harmonise, or because the colours are crude and clash with one another. The badness of the picture, then, consists in a want of harmony. Moreover, when I say that the picture appears to me to be bad, I mean that it offends my eye and judgment. There is a discord between the picture and me. Either, then, the picture is faulty or else my judgment is faulty. They cannot both be good. Since there is a discord there must be badness on one side or the other.

Again, I am working out a problem in algebra and make a mistake, with the result that the working does not cohere. The conclusion does not correspond to the premises, nor the intermediate stages to each other. The whole thing is thus a discord, and is not a consistent unity. Or, once more, I am misinformed as to an event which I am told has taken place. Somebody tells me that yesterday it rained in London when, as a matter of fact, it was dry the whole day. I am misled and am in error. In what does my error consist if not in this : that my mind is not in harmony with the actual facts? For my mind believes a certain thing and the facts themselves contradict this belief. Intellectual error, then, is a discord.

So, too, when we come from physical, mental, æsthetic and intellectual evil to moral evil, the same principle holds. A man does wrong. He cheats his neighbour or tells a lie. Why is this wrong? Because it introduces a discord. The man who injures his neighbour is not in harmony with him ; for he would not act so if he loved his neighbour as himself. Moreover, all sin is an offence against God, being an infringement of the ideal moral law which is God's

very Being. It is, then, a discord in the man himself; for his lower nature is at variance with his higher nature, and the flesh warreth against the spirit. The soul itself is, as the mystics say, “uncentred”: it has lost its true orbit, and is not in a state of inward harmony. God is the Element in which alone it can dwell, and with this, its own proper Element, it is at strife.

All evil, therefore, of whatever kind—physical, which is bodily pain; mental, which is grief and sorrow; æsthetic, which is ugliness; intellectual, which is error; and moral, which is sin—exhibits one constant type, and is a want of harmony.

Now, evolution tells us that the world is one great whole, showing the same fundamental principles at work from top to bottom of the system. It tells us that a vast amount of discord has been present in the whole creation from the very first and through every phase of its advancing history. Hence it tells us that human wickedness, instead of being a fact entirely without precedent in the world, is but the complete and rankest fruitage of a pestilential seed sown before the beginning of all things.

The blind clash and conflict of the primal chaos was a discord, and therefore it was evil. As this conflict was gradually subdued by patient Goodness into something partially good, there sprang upon the surface of the world the myriad forms of life. And here once more the conflict began; and this strife of kind with kind, the carnage and the struggle of the plant and then of the brute creation, once more was evil for the same reason. Moreover, the sensitive animal began to feel pain; and pain is a far worse form of evil than the mere blind clash of elements.

The bad principle is now becoming conscious of itself ; it is becoming more replete with its loathsome charge ; it is entering on its own foul heritage ; and, in a word, is unfolding something of its hidden forces.

The process of evolution still advances, and, with the advent of man, appears a fact unknown before—the fact of wilful human sin. Evil has now, within the human heart, come fully to its own. It has attained to its maturity, and, being at last of age, has received its vile inheritance. It has unfolded in a far completer form the forces that lay dormant within it.

The world, then, is one system, and, as the system progresses, one and the same principle of evil is within it, growing by slow degrees more conscious and more complete. The raw material of human sin is therefore to be found in that first blind conflict of the elements in which all things began.

This conception fits in with the teaching of our Lord, Who taught that pain and sickness and death are the work of Satan and do not come from the hand of God.¹ Out of evil God may create good results, yet in their own nature all such things are evil ; and physical death has ever been among all Christians an apt symbol of that death which destroys the soul. Thus physical evil (which is pain or death) and moral evil (which is sin) both come from the same power of darkness which works as the one principle of evil at every stage of the creation.

And this great thought is the foundation on which St. Paul builds much of his theology. The tribulations of the groaning universe are somehow connected with the dominion of sin within the heart of man,

¹ *E.g.* St. Luke xiii. 16.

and therefore the creation, in its anguish, looks for the redemption of the sons of God.¹ No doubt St. Paul connected the death and pain in the animal world and all the imperfections of the lower creation with the curse pronounced in Genesis, and traced to the fall of Adam all the suffering in the universe. Of this more presently. For the moment the important point is this: the Apostle sees the same principle of evil at work in every stage of the vast system. The sickness, pain and death at work in the animal world are, according to him, no part of God's original plan; but are connected with human sin, and must be somehow traced to the same hideous cause.

Most clearly of all does this come out in that great passage where he deals with the origin of physical death, and contrasts the havoc wrought by Adam with the great work of reparation wrought by Christ. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come: but not as the offence, so also is the free gift: for if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."²

Adam, then, has sinned, and by his sin has introduced physical death. His act of rebellion has

¹ Romans viii. 10 *et seq.*

² *Ib.* v. 12-15.

opened the flood-gates of evil, and the devouring tide has thus burst through and spread in deluge over the whole human race. Death and sin are inseparably connected, and it is one and the same terrible force that has gripped both body and soul.

Now, St. Paul did not know, what modern discoveries have since revealed, that there was death in the world long before man appeared. But death St. Paul regards as an evil thing. Hence, before the appearance of man there was evil in the world.

Moreover, death and sin are, according to St. Paul, causally connected together. It is one and the same principle of evil that produces both ; and sin is the cause of death. But, since we now know that there was death in the lower animals before there was man upon earth, it is clear that there was death before there was sin. Therefore, human sin is not the cause which has brought physical death into existence. And therefore, if the causal connection, which is vital to St. Paul's theology, is to be preserved, it must be maintained in some other form. Now, there are two possible alternatives. If sin and death are causally connected, and yet sin is not the cause of death, then either death is the cause of sin (which does not seem to be quite satisfactory) or else both sin and death are due to one common underlying cause. This is the true explanation, and leads to illuminating results. It fits in with the scheme of Pauline theology, and also with the facts of modern science. The same principle of evil (called by St. Paul *ἀπάτη*) works both in the physical world as bodily death and in the spiritual world as sin. And this truth St. Paul, in point of fact, actually held, having derived it from

his own religious experience. The only element of his theory that must be rejected is the notion that bodily death, besides being a manifestation of the same power which appears in the form of sin, is also the direct result of sin and must be traced to the transgression of Adam. And this notion St. Paul derived, not from his religious experience, but from the defective science of his day. Reject this notion of sin as the direct cause of physical death, keep only the conception of sin and death as both due to one underlying cause, and St. Paul's whole theology loses nothing but that precise element which interferes with its essential inward consistency.

Evil is a discord, and this discord runs throughout the whole universe. It appears in that blind clash of forces in which the world began; it appears in the strife of kind with kind and in the fact of animal pain and death; and finally, it appears within the heart of man as that most terrible fact called human sin. The gap which separates this completed and developed form of the evil principle latent in nature from all the previous forms it has taken is, of course, so vast and huge that no mind of man can possibly bridge it over. It is precisely as great as the gap which separates the human race, endowed as it is with developed consciousness and will and reason, from the rest of the whole creation. To the exact extent to which man is immeasurably nobler and more wonderful than all the rest of the universe, to that exact extent is human sin immeasurably more terrible than any other fact in the world. The chasm between the developed product of the evil principle and its first rudiments is beyond all telling, but the principle itself is the same throughout.

St. Augustine says somewhere that original sin is due to a law of necessity (*necessitas*) which tyrannises over the human race. On the other hand, he constantly teaches that all human goodness is due to nothing but the grace of God. Thus in the spiritual life of man there arises this antithesis of necessity (which is the law of evil) and grace (which is the law of good). Each man is held in the iron grip of necessity until the grace of God by its gentle and persuasive influence touches the chains so that they melt away and the man is freed from bondage. Is not this precisely parallel to that antithesis between "necessity" and "reasonable persuasion" (*ἀνάγκη* and *πειθώ* *ἔμφρων*) which, as Plato tells us, is at work, and has been at work from the first, in the evolution of the material world? St. Augustine is not, of course, thinking of any such thing. His one interest, when he uses this language, is with the intense and profound experience of his own inmost life. It is therefore all the more significant that, in trying to express the truth of his spiritual being, he naturally uses the very antithesis which Plato had centuries before him employed to express the facts of the world's material development. This coincidence has but one explanation. It becomes perfectly natural and inevitable if the two contrary principles which meet in the production of the material world are precisely the principles that meet over again in the spiritual life of man.

From this cause, then, comes that sense of a struggle between two opposing elements which marks so strongly the experience of St. Paul and of all the saints of God. Always we find these two great factors of bondage and of freedom, and always we find the great process

of the universe thus reproduced within the human heart.

This unity of the world the "fall" theory ignores. It isolates one kind of evil and treats it independently of the rest. It takes the rank and poisonous fruit and says that, while the root and the tree are healthy, this fruit has chosen to go bad. And if you point out that precisely the same poisons are contained in the tree itself, the reply is made that some of the most flagrant of the imperfections were introduced into the tree by the rotting fruit, or else that they are not really imperfections if we could but see things in due proportion. Or else we are told that man's feeble mind must not hope to know everything. The imperfections are blemishes certainly, and it is disquieting to find that they were there before the tree had any fruit at all. The thing, then, is inexplicable: it must be left a hopeless enigma. In other words, the difficulty is either trifled with or ignored.

The "fall" theory starts by taking sin as a separate fact, which it examines in isolation and tries, thus, to explain. In this it does not succeed, as will be presently seen; but even if it did succeed, the problem of evil would not have been solved. The worst part of it would have been undoubtedly disposed of, but the remainder is still a very tough and indigestible morsel. If the "fall" theory had explained the fact of sin, there still would remain the fact of animal death and pain in the world before man appeared, to say nothing of the hideous agonies of man himself from such causes as earthquakes and eruptions, which certainly cannot be the result of his transgression. And a theory which leaves out of account such terrific facts as these stands

wholly self-condemned. Too long has the conscience of Christendom struggled to stifle its natural instincts ; too long has it struggled to see, in this world's wholesale sufferings, the immediate providence of God ; too long has it struggled to bless Him for such handiwork and to acquiesce in His inscrutable will. The endeavour sprang from a heroic loyalty, and yet it was a vast mistake. Man's natural instinct of rebellion is a sacred flame which, in the name of God, should be cherished and not smothered. It is, indeed, itself the very spirit of Christ.

The plea is constantly urged that suffering is not really bad, since it is often seen to have such extremely good results. The warning throb of pain reveals the presence of disease or of some other danger, and hence through its means life is preserved. Or, better still, suffering has an ennobling effect on human character. It trains and disciplines the man, and draws out his courage, his patience and his sympathy. Those who have suffered least are those whose character is least developed ; and if we want to know what is a man's worth and strength we can but ask : "How much pain has he endured ?" To suffer nobly is the greatest privilege this life can hold. But for this two-edged sword where would be the martyrs and the heroes and the saints ? They would not have existed at all ; for they could not be shaped without its keen incision. If there were no pain in all the world, then indeed would life be stale, flat and unprofitable.

All this is happily true, and more than true. God can turn the curse into a blessing : His touch can change all basest things into gold. Yet the curse is in itself a curse, and the base thing is base ; and the

miracle is precisely this, that God can transmute into good that which in itself is evil. Just as, by His patient meekness, He brings the vital impulse out of the jarring elements of brute force, even so, by the same patient meekness, He brings that power of the saints and heroes out of the jarring elements of pain.

Moreover, if this argument proves anything, it proves too much. For God brings good out of human wickedness. The noblest on this earth are those who have battled against the hydra-headed corruption of the world, and only in so fighting against the powers of darkness have they attained their own true spiritual greatness. If there were no sin and wickedness in the world, then some of the greatest heights of human goodness would not have been achieved, and the whole human race would be immeasurably the poorer. Without the fact, or at least the possibility, of sin the world would be a somewhat dull and useless place—a home of gelatinous, invertebrate mediocrities, in which nothing virile, strong and grand could ever thrive and grow. Often it is only when, having battled for the right and failed, a man throws himself down in sick disgust upon the earth and prays for death, since he is no better than his fathers, that he finds within him that patient strength of God which he could not have known had he lived in a sinless paradise.

But more than this. The whole of human Redemption was wrought out through nothing but a brutal crime. God, in His own patient way, used the treachery of Judas, the jealousy of the priests and the cowardice of Pilate, and out of these base ingredients He brought that mysterious result which radiates through the human race its beams of hope and healing.

God took that foul crime, and out of it He snatched a blessing. He suffered it and, by suffering it, turned it into His act of sacrifice. Did it for that reason lose its guilt? Did Caiaphas or did Judas become an angel of light?

The "fall" theory, then, makes no serious attempt to solve the wider problem of evil as a whole: it confines itself to one aspect of it—to that presented by human sin. It is, of course, perfectly true that sin is by far the worst form of evil that exists: nevertheless it is not the only one; and hence, even if the theory of the "fall" could be proved up to the hilt, it would not be any solution of the total problem. There would still be the fact of human pain and death, and there would still be the fact of animal pain and death long before man appeared; and a solution which leaves untouched these ghastly facts is little short of useless.

But the truth is that, even as an answer to the narrower problem which it does try to face, the "fall" theory utterly breaks down. It does not explain, in the smallest degree, the fact of human sin.

It will be best to start with the clear teaching which St. Paul elaborated out of his own experience. There is, he says, a principle of sin within the nature of man; and this is latent from the first, but until the man has developed he is not responsible for the actions in which it issues. "For until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law."¹ Primitive man does wrong in obedience to this latent sinful impulse; but, not having received the law, he

¹ Romans v. 13.

does not know that he is doing wrong. He sins unconsciously and in ignorance, and therefore he cannot be blamed. Then the law is revealed to man.¹ His conscience is enlightened, and he realises the nature of his act. If he does it still he does it consciously, and therefore he now is deserving of blame : he now is responsible, and the act is a sin.

Apply this principle to the process of evolution. The shrike and the spider torture their wretched victims not only with a complete and utter indifference to their feelings, but sometimes with what looks like a sheer delight in causing pain. This is because there exists in the spider and the shrike a principle of evil or, in Pauline phraseology, of sin (*ἀμαρτία*). But we do not blame them. They are not to be held responsible, and therefore are not wicked ; for they do not know any better, or understand the nature of their actions. They are not fully conscious beings ; their personality is in so rudimentary a condition that they do not know the difference between right and wrong ; they have not, as St. Paul would say, received "the law" ; their moral sense has not yet developed.

But now suppose that those dormant personalities could awaken into fuller life. Suppose the spider or the shrike were to become fully conscious of itself and were to understand the nature of its action. Straightway it would realise the cruelty of what it is doing. It would be able to distinguish right from wrong, and would act no more from a blind instinct of half unconscious impulse, but with a more or less clear and deliberate purpose. Now it is more or less responsible for its actions ; now, if it still tortures its victims,

¹ Romans iv. 15, v. 20, vii. 7-23.

it is to blame. We can no longer say it knows no better: being conscious of its actions, it has received "the law"; and therefore its deed of cruelty is now an actual sin.

Now, this awakening of the dormant personality to a fuller consciousness is exactly what has taken place in the human species. Civilised man in his nature becomes aware of certain selfish instincts: he finds himself, by a natural impulse within him ("the law of sin"), doing certain acts which are wrong. As his conscience develops and he becomes more and more alive to his own actions, he realises that these things are wrong. And if he still persists in them, they now are sin.

If, then, we take St. Paul's teaching and try to understand his inner experience by the light of evolution, the result is beyond all question. A principle of evil has been in the world from its first commencement, gradually beginning to become conscious of itself as the personal principle begins to awake and expand, and finally in civilised man attaining its most complete development. And this principle in the human race, to the exact extent to which it is in each man developed and self-conscious and therefore wilful, is to that extent actual sin. There is no break between the brute and man: there is merely a further development (though a vast one) of a common original principle. Man did not receive from the brute an untainted nature and then by his act corrupt it: he received from the brute the best the brute could give, and that was a nature tainted through and through. Human sin thus bears to certain instincts of the lower animals precisely the same relation that human

personality bears to the animal's rudimentary consciousness.

The theory of the "fall," then, does not try to explain the wider problem of evil as a whole, and it fails in its attempt to explain the narrower problem of sin.

Having brought this antiquated piece of lumber up from the hold and cast it overboard, modern theology heaves a sigh of relief. The good ship is lightened, and speeds merrily on her way. The harbour soon seems to come in sight, and the voyage is certainly much pleasanter than it was before. But, though extremely enjoyable, it is far from safe. The old lumber was certainly quite useless for guiding or steering the ship, but it, at least, made very fair ballast. The vessel is lighter without it, but, unless we can get some other and better material to take its place, this will not be wholly an unmixed advantage. The first real storm of temptation and, without her ballast, she may run great danger of capsizing.

Or shall we say that the lumber was not itself the ballast, being merely some old and useless tackle, but that with misguided zeal the mariners, in throwing away the obsolete tackle, have heaved the ballast overboard as well?

The "fall" theory has gone. So far so good. But, while getting rid of it, some persons appear to think that the doctrine of original sin must go at the same time. This is a disastrous mistake, and cannot be commended. The doctrine cannot be discarded without the worst results, and its rejection does great violence to the facts of human life. The man who does not hold the doctrine of original sin in its

most emphatic form is living in a very unsubstantial paradise.

It is impossible to take a cursory glance through human history without being rudely startled out of any such pleasing delusion. Every page of the narrative is blackened with the record of deeds before which the mind is paralysed with horror. No man who has once realised in the smallest degree the countless cruelties devised by man to torture his brother man will ever doubt again the corruption of human nature. Thousands of human beings, with feelings like our own, have been burnt, have been flayed, have been crucified, have been impaled, have been roasted and tortured to death by methods of slow and ingenious torment too utterly loathsome to think upon. If those who so lightly dismiss as puerile the doctrine of original sin could see actually before them a single one of those unnumbered deeds of cruelty, their optimism would all be crushed and shattered into fragments, and they would never smile again until the Cross of Christ had taught them how they might.

Judge man not by theories, but by facts. Look at his deeds, and then ask from whence they come. The hellish hate which stains the whole of human history is to be measured by those tales of horror; nay, it is not to be measured by them, for if worse tortures had been possible the malice of man would have devised them. It is, unhappily, an all too obvious fact that men have, times without number, shown themselves capable of being devils incarnate.

Then be it remembered that the impulses and the instincts which issued in those fearful scenes exist,

though checked and bridled, in each human being. This is a fact that none can doubt who looks into his own heart ; and those who know themselves the best are those who feel it the most intensely. This being so, shall we dare to be quite easy ? Shall we dare to say that this putrid sore in our being is a thing that does not greatly matter ? Shall we look upon the doctrine of original sin as a figment of the morbid fancy ? Shall we doubt for another instant that it is a plain statement of the simple truth ?

The line of argument by which attempts are made to minimise the ugliness of sin is this :—All sin is but goodness in the making ; and the human passions are not to be destroyed, but only to be rightly directed. The person without any natural vices is, after all, a person without character. The spirit of adventure which causes the slum-bred youth to indulge in burglary for the sheer fun and mischief of the thing is precisely the quality that makes the leader of men or the hero on the field of battle ; while the boy who does not get into mischief at school is often wanting in spirit, and is an object of anxiety and disappointment to the authorities. All wickedness, in fact, even the greatest, is nothing else than a mistaken search for God. It is not therefore bad in itself, being merely a sort of misguided exuberance which need not greatly worry us.

All which (apart from this last optimistic deduction from the premises) is entirely true, and has been recognised by some of those orthodox fathers of the Church whom modern enlightenment, from its superior heights, ignores. Let us be glad it is true. The world does not belong wholly to the devil, after all.

God needs the raw material to produce His own results, and without it He cannot work. At the same time, the raw material left to itself must inevitably go bad ; and, when it has gone bad, it is not a pleasant thing.

"Evil is good in the making." Let us rather say it is the raw material of good in the unmaking or decomposing. "No impulse is bad in itself." Most true. The engine which drives the ship is not bad in itself. Without it the ship could not reach the harbour. Nevertheless, without due guidance it will drive the vessel on to the rocks ; and, as she sinks, it will not mend matters much to know that the power which has driven her there might have brought her into the haven of rest. "Sin is a mistaken quest for God." Most true again. St. Augustine told us this long ago. So did some of the schoolmen and other benighted beings. But there is very little comfort in the reflection, nor does it get rid of the facts.

A man in a bell-foundry is hastening out of the building. His work is finished for the day ; and the air is close inside. He wants to breathe the fresh breezes of heaven, and then to get to his home. And so he hurries on with exuberant haste. But he is too eager. On the way he slips. He falls into the tank of molten metal and meets a fearful end. He was not trying to fall in. He was trying to get to the fresh air outside and to his wife and family. That was the object of his quest. But the result is none the less terrible.

Or again, a man plucks a poisonous fruit which kills him with great agony. He was not seeking the poison. He was trying to find wholesome nourishment, and, in the search, he took the poison by mistake.

He felt a hunger which must be satisfied, and that hunger needed good food. In obedience to this impulse within him he was making a mistaken quest for something that was good. But that does not alter the facts.

It is sometimes remarked that the "fall" was really a "fall upward." But does this explain anything whatever, or make evil one whit the less of a terrible fact? Certainly, a good man is a better thing than a pig. But it is precisely on that account that a bad man is a worse thing than a pig.

One way of trying to explain away the whole fact of evil is to call it a by-product. But this is really nothing more than a refined way of saying that it is bad. The machine, as it moves, is very stiff: there is much friction, and this friction is what we call evil. It cannot be helped, and we must not worry: no machine moves quite smoothly. Precisely. That is exactly where the difficulty lies. Why cannot the wheels of the universe turn without all this friction? Why is the machine so wretchedly put together? In a word, why is it such a bad machine?

Moreover, evil is not a mere by-product. If you could eliminate all friction, the wheels of a machine would go much better; but if you could eliminate all evil, there would be no world at all. The strife and clash of kind with kind have been the means by which the process has developed. Without it there could have been no advance, and man could not have appeared. And in human life the same struggle has been necessary for producing all man's noblest qualities. Evil, then, is not the mere friction of the machine. Sometimes it looks very much like the coal which has produced the steam for driving it.

Or shall we rather compare it to that opposition of parts without which the machine could not perform its functions? Cog-wheel asserts itself against cog-wheel, and from this mutual conflict comes the motion of the whole machine. Even so does kind struggle against kind, individual against individual, and from this mutual strife has come the gradual advance of the whole world-process.

But the most satisfactory method of dealing with all unpleasant facts is that of the ostrich. Put your head in the sand and say they are not there. This is the secret of that happy solution which finds that evil need not trouble us because it is non-existent.

This discovery is, of course, perfectly correct from a purely speculative point of view; and it is also extremely old. It is found probably in most ancient systems of idealistic philosophy, and was also held by some of the greatest minds of the mediæval Church. But, from the practical point of view, it does not explain anything. It may indeed help us to transcend and conquer evil; it may teach us to seek in God a final refuge beyond the touch of pain and sin; it may teach us to feel that, even amid the struggles of this earth, we may yet dwell in that supernal peace which is beyond all struggle and where no evil can come; it may, even in the midst of time, open for us that mansion of eternity which is beyond all time's uneasy changes; but it does not get rid of the fact that evil, which is non-existent in heaven, is an actual and existent fact upon this earth. It does not and it cannot explain the grim fact away. It gives us the power to suffer evil, but it never can annihilate it.

And in fact this explanation, like the previous

one, is but another way of saying that evil is evil, and that pain and sin are bad. God's ultimate Being is an ideal Being. Hence to say that a thing has no existence in Him and has no place in His Being is the same thing as to say that it ought not to exist in this world. But that does not mean that it does not exist in this world. Pain, sickness, death, discord, sin, certainly ought not to be. But this merely means that they are bad.

So much, then, for some of the most popular attempts to explain away the obvious facts. Their intention is most excellent, but unhappily they will not work. Indeed, if this fashionable attitude towards the great problem be compared with the obsolete "fall" theory, the conclusion is inevitable that in some respects this last error is worse than the one it has displaced.

The "fall" theory did at least face one part of the problem : it did lay the greatest stress on the reality and malignity of sin. It even tried, though unscientifically enough, to account for some of the other forms of evil by referring them to man's transgression. Human suffering and death, it said, was ultimately due to the fall of man, which brought into the world these ghastly horrors in its train. This did not explain everything, but it was made to cover a fairly large percentage of the facts ; and, as for the rest, the most reverent attitude of mind was to give the whole question up as insoluble and to take refuge in the thought that God moves in a mysterious way. The modern attitude, on the other hand, tries to explain away the whole of the problem impartially. And, though this may be more logical and consistent than the attitude of old-fashioned piety, it is even less

satisfactory, in some respects, for this very reason. Instead of ignoring only some aspects of the question, it, with admirable logical consistency, ignores them all. It puts the hard facts of this world into its scientific crucible, and seeks, by heating its intellectual fires sevenfold, to sublimate the whole to a vapour which may be dispersed into thin air. But the facts will not respond to this treatment. They merely fuse into one homogeneous whole, which solidifies into a more formidable body than before.

Strange as it may seem, there is beneath the “fall” theory and these cheerful attempts to explain away all the facts one common foundation. It is not difficult to recognise once more that incongruous relic of Natural Religion which, stranded on the shores of the Christian Faith, collects around it all the scum floating upon the theological seas. Remove that venerable hulk (it is already tumbling to pieces), and the collections of scum will get carried off by the vital currents of human thought (the very currents which brought them there) and will cease to clog the waters. The anti-Christian theory of omnipotence is to blame, on the present occasion, for two mutually contradictory errors.

Starting with a belief that God, being almighty, could do all things, theology regarded it as an axiom that He must have made mankind in the beginning wholly free from sin. It was incredible that God should have created a being so miserably and terribly imperfect as man knows himself to be. Hence it followed that man was created pure, but by his transgression he rebelled against his Maker and fell, producing thus the taint which infects the entire race.

So theology maintained until inexorable facts upset

the whole theory. It became impossible to believe in the “fall”; and we were compelled to acknowledge that man never was, even in the first moment of his creation, a better being than he is now. From this it seemed to follow that the whole conception of human nature must be revised. It is impossible to believe in a God who first creates man impure and sinful and then blames him for being impure and sinful. God cannot very well treat man’s transgressions quite seriously if He is Himself their ultimate author: He cannot very well repudiate His own handwriting. Sin, then, cannot be quite such a bad thing after all. God chose, in His omnipotent power and among all the methods He might have employed, to create man sinful, and He chose to create a world of death and pain. It follows that He rather prefers a certain admixture of evil. He seasons the dish well; and some squeamish folk may think the condiments rather strong. But such persons must be discouraged: there is no use for them in the world. In fact, it is a positive impiety to be over-scrupulous. If God has so created the universe, we must, without making wry faces, accept it and learn to like it if we can. Shall man be more pure than his Maker?

This theory, then, like the “fall” theory, springs from a sincere and honest desire to justify the ways of God to men. But such justifications, however ingenuous, are always of the nature of a pious fraud. The cause of God has suffered more from the misdirected zeal of its champions than from any open attacks. It can hold its own against all the forces of its foes, but not against the undermining operations conducted by well-meaning defenders. The astonishing

thing is that there is any religion left at all, when religious folk have so long regarded it as their duty to make God responsible for what is the devil's work.

Get rid, then, of the false conception of omnipotence, and everything falls into its right place. God could not make the world perfect, because His power consists wholly in love; and love cannot impose itself by force and from outside upon any single thing. Love can only attract by its inherent goodness, merely waiting until all things, by their own inward nature, are impelled to seek it. Thus the whole creation is tainted with evil, and evil in all its ghastly forms is, unhappily, a hideous fact. And this always has been the case even from the very beginning. Man was impure when he came into being, and the world was a bad world before he came. And God is powerless to prevent this, or to do ought else than suffer it; for His omnipotence cannot coerce, but can only endure in silent patience. If God could have made the world perfect at first, then His power would be a power of brute force which can compel obedience; but if His power consists of mere love, it almost follows inevitably that the world must from the first have been imperfect and contrary to His nature.

The "fall" theory, then, is gone; but its rejection does not impose upon us the necessity of explaining away the facts of life in the interests of any theological system. The facts remain. Evil is a ghastly thing in all its forms, and is utterly hateful in the sight of God, Who feels for it a loathing that no man on earth can understand. Pain is a horrible reality, and sin is more horrible still. The whole earth groans aloud in anguish and degradation. And inwards, at

the very centre of the world, these cries strike upon the ear of God, Who hears them with an infinite grief; for, at the inmost core of all things, there is no mere creative mind or vital force: there is a Human Heart, and that Heart is broken.

We are not, then, obliged, out of deference to religion, to find a wise and loving purpose in all things upon earth. We are not, with the upholders of the obsolete "fall" theory, obliged to say that the earthquake or the inundation is either a judgment (a notion contradicted by Christ) or else is a mysterious part of some great providential order for which we should learn to thank God if we knew more of the facts (a notion to which Christ gives just as little countenance). And hence we are saved much mental jugglery and much well-intentioned equivocation. If I must believe that the earthquake, with its attendant horrors, comes from God, then I must try to get rid of my natural instinct that pain, in itself, is bad. But if so, then sin must be a thing of an entirely different order from pain, nor may I bring the two under the same category together. And this being the case, then the result is that my horror of sin must be weakened. For a sense of pain is the most natural thing in all men; a real sense of sin is acquired with much difficulty by a few. And if I try to persuade myself that some of the ghastliest forms of pain (for which I have a natural horror) are really exhibitions of the Divine mercy and wisdom, then it becomes far harder for me to realise that sin is really a bad thing at all. And so the "fall" theory may often tend to weaken the sense of sin by making the whole thing unreal and artificial.

But let us take the facts as they are. Let us face them honestly, and we know that pain is a sickening evil. A true conception of omnipotence does not demand that we should try, under any circumstances, to get away from this fact. It only demands that we should be consistent in the deductions which we make from it.

Life becomes a heavy burden when once it has been realised that a day never passes but many a hapless human being, through the operation of Nature's pitiless iron laws, is burnt to death. The burden is not lightened if it be further realised that a far more terrible fact is the fact of human sin. Physical pain is a very frightful thing ; it is utterly and wholly of the devil ; it is the principle of evil at work in the mortal body. Sin is a similar thing, but it is far more frightful. It is the same principle of evil at work, not in the unwilling mortal body, but in the willing immortal soul ; it is that same ugly principle accepted by the personality and taken into the very fibre and fabric of its being. Therefore it follows that, if pain is evil, then sin is evil in a far worse form. The pain in my body touches only the outskirts and fringes of my being ; it is not really myself, and, when I die, it will cease and I shall be at rest : the evil in my soul penetrates to the very core and centre ; it is my very self, and, when I die, its corrupting taint will yet remain.

And the great horror of this cancer within our being comes precisely from the fact that God's power does not consist in force. If God had first made the world by His irresistible might and then had pronounced a curse upon His creation because it was so badly made,

the noblest attitude which the mind of man could adopt would be one of flat rebellion. If the deviser of this vast round of pain forbids me to do certain things, then my proper course is to do them. Since He is irresistible, no doubt He can torture me for my disobedience; but that is not a very worthy reason for my acquiescing. Cowardice is not a Christian virtue, as we have too long appeared to assume.

But if God's power consists in nothing but love, my highest instincts tell me that to wound that tender heart is itself the vilest cowardice. It is a black and hateful thing to wrong One Who, by the very nature of His omnipotence, is bound and tied hand and foot in the midst of this evil world, and is obliged to bear, not only the physical sufferings of the whole creation, but also the far more bitter pain of human malice and sin. The tears of Peter will one day be ours, and they will be far more scalding tears than any that could be wrung from us by mere irresistible vengeance. They will burn our cheeks with grief and shame for this very reason, that in all the wrongs we do to God He cannot possibly resist us.

Therefore it is that Christ speaks of the scorching fires of hell, therefore that He speaks of the hideous outer darkness and of the worm that never dies. Beyond a doubt sin is, for Him, a very terrible and frightful fact. And if we call ourselves Christians we dare not presume to know better than our Master.

It is the mere patient goodness of God that makes the fate of sin so fearful. This may sound a paradox, but, when considered carefully, it becomes an obvious truth. For what is pain and sickness of body except the absence of some good thing which the body needs?

And what can be the ultimate pain of the soul except to be bereft of God?

A certain mild and gentle temperature is necessary to our comfort; and while we are possessed of this the body is at ease. But let this temperature be lost. Suppose I plunge into a fiery furnace. My ease is changed to torment. Yet what is it that has been done? I have merely been cut off from the mild temperature which I need. The heat of the furnace is merely the absence of this temperature: it is nothing more. And that is the precise cause of my suffering.

So too, because God is love and nothing else than love, the human soul can find its peace in Him alone. It needs Him as its Element, in Whom it may live and dwell as the body dwells in the congenial element of the mild, benignant air. But by its own deed it may cut itself off from Him. And this absence of the Element it needs can only be, when it is conscious of its state, a hideous and appalling anguish.

Thus the Christian conception of omnipotence, applied to the problem of evil, may claim to be a solution so far as any solution is possible. It cannot, of course, open the door of that ultimate mystery which is bolted on the inside (though even there it unfastens a narrow hatch through which we may peer from without); but it at least enables us to do justice to the plain and obvious facts without feeling it our duty somehow to explain them away. It enables us to see that the world is a bad world, and that God hates the sight of all its hideous evil. It enables us to see that He beholds the spectacle with an infinite and awful pain, and yet cannot stop the thing He

loathes to look upon, because the power to exercise coercion would itself be a weakness and a limitation and therefore foreign to His ultimate nature.

And the same conception helps us to see how evil, which exists all too plainly on this earth, is yet non-existent in God, Who is behind the whole world-process. Love suffers evil, and, in suffering, feels itself to be strong. By being crushed, it conquers and knows its own hidden grandeur: by suffering wrong, God knows Himself and His own boundless goodness. And this is the only perfect heavenly joy; for the knowledge of God is happiness, nor is there any other. Thus it is God's infinite bliss to suffer boundless pain in the perfect patience of infinite love, since only so can He truly know Himself. And thus that perfect love which is His Being and His endless power, by plunging Him weak and helpless into the midst of this evil world, in that very act exalts Him far above it into that still and tranquil region of His own eternity beyond the reach of any ill. So have the most highly favoured ones upon this earth suffered by His grace a heavy burden of pain and, in the patient fortitude thus evoked, have found a well of heavenly comfort: so have they, amid life's bitter sorrows, had within them a calm and tranquil peace, a peace consisting in no freedom from fierce struggle, but in that silent, hidden strength which can bear the struggle and be firm.

Evil exists upon this earth. God bears it, and, by bearing it, He conquers it. By conquering it He transcends it, and thus He dwells in that far heaven (a heaven so far and yet so infinitely near) in which the evil has no existence. It has become the necessary condition of His perfect bliss. Without it that deep

and holy joy would be impossible. And in this fact the evil ceases to be.

To that still region we can but lift mute hands and pant with unutterable longing. To that far heaven we raise our eyes and strain them through the rank vapours of this earth with ceaseless yearning, if perchance we can but gain one glimpse of that celestial vision to give us hope and courage. The suffocating fumes of earth rise up and choke the breath and blind the labouring eyes. The hard and cruel facts of evil cast their dark shadow across our path and blot out all the light of heaven. The mind is dazed and stunned by the appalling spectacle. It sees a world saturated and permeated from its very commencement with a principle of evil. It sees this principle beginning in the mere clash of primal elements, then gradually awakening into a fuller and more deadly activity as it shows itself first in physical pain and death and then in the culminating monstrosity of human malice and sin. Confused, bewildered and amazed, the mind reels from the sight as from a staggering blow : the light of hope seems gone, faith well-nigh impossible.

And yet one gleam still pierces the pall of darkness, a gleam which, while by contrast it shows up the gloom in all its hideous horror, is none the less a witness of that bright day which lies beyond. It comes from the conception of omnipotence as consisting, not in any coercive force of irresistible compulsion, but solely in the boundless power of boundless love to suffer and endure.

CHAPTER VII

CHRIST THE FULFILLER

AND is this the end of all those expectations with which the journey began ? Has the long and weary march across the burning plain led to nothing more than a mirage ? Was it, after all, but a vain hope that in man would be found the goal of the whole creation ? Was it nothing but a pleasing self-deception that looked forward to finding all things explained in him ?

If man fulfilled the ideal of his own being, if man were perfect and free from all taint of sin, then in him there would be found the final explanation. Then we could look upon him and thus could say, by the light of his glorious achievement, that the whole dark process of the world is flooded with splendid purpose. Though all creation groans in pain and travail, yet if this marvellous being, with his sublime and heavenly gift of moral goodness, has sprung from those long birth-pangs, they have not been in vain. Then we might rejoice in holy triumph amidst a universe of death and ruin, and call upon the whole creation to share in our great gladness and to rejoice with us amidst its pains and struggles. The long labour has at length been crowned with a result so grand and so stupendous and full of so unspeakable a glory that we may dare to say it was well worth the while. The suffering brute creation may rejoice with us, for they

will be partakers of those blessings which their sufferings have been privileged finally to bring. Their pains at last have ended in a being so infinitely noble that all the labour is lit up with a celestial radiance from this great and final product of the strife.

So, too, the sufferings of man himself would be transfigured with glory, and all that he must bear in his struggles against his iron fate would be changed from a grievous and a heavy load even into the condition of an intenser form of joy. If man fulfilled his heavenly ideal, then better, far better, that he should suffer, rather than that he should not be at all : if man be perfect, then, through all the bitter pain, we may yet dare to believe that all is well. The pain still comes not from God : yet love can conquer pain ; and thus, if man be perfect, God's triumph is complete. His patient power has drawn a harmony even out of the very elements of discord.

Such was the hope and such the earnest expectation. That hope, that expectation, lie shattered on the ground. Man is not perfect, but is infected with the taint of sin. The noblest and the saintliest are not free from it : in fact, they do but feel it the most bitterly. No single man fulfils this heavenly ideal : none, then, is a sufficient explanation of Nature's mighty process. In no single man is to be found more than a hint and a fragmentary suggestion ; in none a complete and perfect answer to the vast and painful problem.

And yet, in the very moment that this conclusion of despair is uttered, there rises in the heart a faint reviving hope. So far as the human mind can see, there is not, indeed, nor can exist on earth, such a

being as is needed. And yet a hidden instinct whispers that perhaps, in spite of the sheer impossibility of the thing, such a being may be found. That which has lured the traveller's steps over the burning sands turns out, indeed, to be no substantial reality complete and perfect in itself; and yet the mirage is not, perhaps, a mere illusion. Possibly it is no mere figment of the weak and wandering brain crazed by the scorching heat of the desert and, through the very intensity of its desire, giving a visible form to the creation of its fancy. It may be, after all, a reflection from some tangible reality which exists, though far away. And if this should be so, then the mirage itself acquires fresh worth and value as being a witness to that substantial land of which it is the hint and shadowy suggestion.

By all the known laws of evolution it is utterly impossible that a sinless man should ever appear, or have appeared, upon this earth. And yet it is just this impossibility that the noblest instincts of the heart demand. Suppose, for a moment, that, by sheer stupendous miracle, this impossible thing should have happened. Forthwith all partial human goodness, wherever it is found, acquires from this fact a meaning, and forthwith, too, a flood of glory irradiates with light the impenetrable gloom.

Has there, then, ever lived upon this earth one perfect human being? A fond and foolish question doubtless, and such as well may provoke a pitying smile. And yet the Christian can give the astonishing reply: "There has."

And this reply is not merely wrung from him by the wild longings of his heart: it is justified on

strictest scrutiny by his deliberate sober reason. For he sees that all mankind are conscious of imperfection to the exact extent to which they have struggled into the light, and that by his depth of self-abasement can be gauged the heights of moral grandeur to which a man has reached. The greatest saints it is who know in their own experience that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us"; it is they who cry aloud to be delivered from the "burden of this death."

Therefore, if there has ever lived one on this earth who was holier than all mankind, there must of necessity be found in him the greatest consciousness of guilt. He will feel the burden of sin pressing on him with a far more crushing weight than any of the other saints of God.

This is what we should expect. But it is what we do not find. In Christ we see One Who was beyond all question pre-eminently holy; and yet Christ never showed the least consciousness of imperfection in Himself. That all mankind are sinful He took for granted; and yet, in the very same moment, He assumed that He was the one exception to this rule. He commanded His disciples to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses;" but there is no record or hint that such a petition ever passed His own lips in His communion with His Father. On the contrary, while He declared that only the pure in heart could see God, He claims for Himself a complete and perfect knowledge of God which was possessed by none else upon earth. And such a claim can only mean that He was morally perfect. In the same spirit He could say to His disciples: "If ye being evil know how to give good

gifts unto your children,"¹ and, in these words, He was making precisely the same claim. If St. Paul or St. John had been the speaker the pronoun would have been "we," and not "ye": in alluding to the fact of human sin they would have felt constrained to include themselves. But Christ feels no such need, either on this or on any other occasion; for the same great fact could be illustrated from all His Life and teaching. It is obvious and astonishing; nor can any sober criticism possibly explain it away. It is the very texture and woof of the whole Gospel fabric, and needs no further words to make it plainer here.

Christ then, Whose goodness was undoubtedly very great, and Whose searching glance detected evil wherever it was lurking in mankind, was nevertheless unconscious of any such taint in Himself. From this there is but one conclusion. If He really was pre-eminently good and sincere, and if, with that peculiar power of detecting sin which sincerity and moral goodness always must possess, He yet could claim to be free from all taint of sin, it follows that He had within Him no such taint, but was morally quite perfect. Thus in Christ this sheer impossible transcendent miracle has taken place. In Him we see something that no known laws of the evolutionary process could possibly produce: in Him we see a Perfect Man.

Here, then, is a solid fact, and one the more astonishing the more we try to realise it. And yet, though it is utterly beyond the grasp of the human imagination, it is a fact to which the mind is absolutely driven by an unassailable process of reasoning. The intellect here, as always when rightly interpreted,

¹ St. Matt. vii. 11; St. Luke xi. 13.

justifies and gives cogency to the instincts of the heart.

And in this fact is to be found the all-sufficient explanation of the world. Here is that great Reality of which the mirage was a reflection ; and, looking at its imperishable beauty, we now can give a value even to the fleeting and imperfect image. Nothing can be useless which gives any remotest hint of Christ ; all human goodness now, however far from perfect, can be looked upon with wonder and with delight. Feeble and fitful it may be, and wholly incomplete ; yet it comes from Him in Whom all perfection is to be found, and is a precious token that He is in the world, although unseen by us. The vast universe now throbs with glorious purpose. Its pains and tribulation and intestine strife are still indeed a ghastly spectacle ; but the loathing and disgust which the sad sight awakens is now all swallowed up in a far more mighty feeling of triumphant confidence. It has now issued, after the groaning anguish of so many long ages, in one complete and final result : there has at last appeared One Perfect Man, and from Him streams forth a flood of glory cleaving a path of radiance through the gloom. No longer is the process now a pitiful failure : it has been changed instead into a grand achievement. A stout heart is, undoubtedly, still needed to make the great affirmation ; but no longer is there need of ignorance and blindness. No longer need we shut our eyes to half the facts of life, if we would retain or would acquire a faith in the meaning of the universe. Looking upon that beaconing Light, which is the Light of the world, we may, with eyes wide open, dare to say, through courage sent from God, that, in the final issue,

all is well. Now it would be a cowardice to wish the world had never been : the struggle and the strife and anguish are all well worth the while, since they have at last been crowned with this great Consummation.

And therefore this One Perfect Man could claim that all things had been delivered unto Him of His Father.¹ For He possessed, and does eternally possess, within Himself the entire secret of the universe. He, by being the one sinless Man, is the great Crown of all things. His Manhood is that eternal point at which this earth and heaven meet and are at one. It is the key to all the process of the world, and equally, as well, to all eternal mysteries. We seek in Christ for nothing but perfect Manhood, and in finding perfect Manhood we find the universe and also we find God. Jesus Christ, as Perfect Man, is the Goal of all the world-process ; Jesus Christ, as Perfect Man, is God. For there is no deity except the deity of Man ; and there is no real humanity except the humanity of God. The two are but the concave and the convex of the same eternal circle.

This fact flows from a true conception of omnipotence. If God's power consists in nothing but in love, it follows, as was suggested, that His transcendence above the world consists in His perfect immanence within it. For love is meek and lowly, and to rise it always stoops : God is mighty in His weakness ; He is exalted by His lowness ; He is above the reach of all things in the very fact of that infinite humility which places Him at the lowest place in their midst. And thus God dwells so deep within the world as to be utterly beyond it.

¹ St. Matthew xi. 27 ; St. Luke x. 22.

Now, in Christ, we see that Divine Spirit which lies at the core of the universe, finally, by a vast stupendous miracle, touching Its own foundations. In Him It has attained Its perfect immanence as the vital principle of all things. Therefore in Him It has equally attained Its perfect transcendence as that eternal power which is beyond them all. And hence, by being Perfect Man, He is literally and absolutely Perfect God.

All human goodness comes from God ; and we reverence and admire every noble deed. This admiration is the very breath of our higher life ; without it we are lower than the brute, and are degraded into mere insensate stocks and stones. Every unselfish act we see touches something deep within us, and we pay it the tribute of our homage, as beholding in it some brightness from the face of God. And, as a human character grows in unselfish goodness, as it climbs from height to height of that steep ascent which leads from earth to heaven, as it lives increasingly for the good of the human race and is willing more and more to spend and to be spent in acts of self-sacrificing love, our admiration grows until at last it acquires a loftier tone. The man becomes to us a hero, and we feel for him a special reverence as for one of higher mould than the general stock of mankind.

And yet we know that our hero is not perfect : he has his blemishes and faults even if we cannot see them. And so there must be a limit to the devotion which we feel ; and while we give him our admiring reverence, we must not offer our worship. We can admire and we can revere all that approaches to perfection and suggests the complete ideal ; and we can do so to the exact extent to which it makes that

approach and that suggestion. But we cannot ever worship it, for it is not actually the perfect and complete ideal itself. Worship is that attitude of mind which says: "This is all I need, or can ever possibly need, to satisfy the deepest and best instincts of my being;" and this attitude we cannot adopt towards anything that is imperfect, however good, or that has blemishes, however few. Nothing can ever claim our worship but that ideal perfection for which our being thirsts.

But now suppose one single Man, as man and nothing else, to be absolutely perfect. Suppose Him to stand on the other side of that impassable chasm which separates all partial goodness from that goodness which is complete. This Perfect Man, as man and nothing else, is precisely that Perfection and that Ideal which we must worship. Therefore, as Man, Christ is God.

The eye can see the light only because it has a kinship to the light—because it has within it the light's very nature. So too can man obtain a certain glimpse of God only because there is hidden within him something that is divine, which, working by heavenly grace in his very essence, endues it with the power of seeing the heavenly vision. And he sees God so imperfectly because he has within him but a ray from God and not the fullness of God's Being. But Christ saw, and sees, God perfectly and completely; and this can only be because He possesses within Him not merely a ray of something that is divine, but actually complete and perfect deity. If only something divine in us can gain the fugitive gleams which are ours, it follows that only perfect God can possess the perfect vision of God.

And therefore, since the human soul of Christ knew and beheld His Father perfectly, it follows that by being Perfect Man, Christ is Himself perfect and absolute God.

I will reverence and admire nothing but goodness because it is good and for no other reason. And this I will reverence and admire wherever I find it in stray and broken gleams illuminating this dark earth. I will worship, therefore, nothing but perfect goodness; and I will worship it for no other reason than that it is perfectly good. But I can find perfect goodness in nothing but a perfect human life. Therefore a perfect human life I will worship and nothing else. If God has any other goodness than that of a perfect Humanity, what does that matter? What interest can it have? But if God's whole Being consists in nothing else than love, then it follows that He has no such other quality. Love is the ultimate perfection of human nature. And that, and nothing else whatsoever than that, is God.

If Socrates, instead of Christ, had been morally perfect, then I would worship Socrates instead of Christ. Socrates would then be God, and Christ would not. And I worship Christ alone because I am convinced that He is the One Perfect Man that has ever lived. This I believe partly because such a stupendous occurrence could not have happened twice in human history (indeed but by miracle it could not have happened once), and more still because of the testimony of Christ Himself. He claimed to be the One Exception. That is enough. There is no more to be said.

And in that other world where all shall be made

perfect, it will be through the work of Christ within them. Therefore it is Christ in them who is to be worshipped, and they are not to be worshipped in themselves. If any man could become perfect in his own strength, that man would be God. But the facts of human life show that this is utterly impossible. Only Christ attained perfection in His own inherent strength; and no man can become perfect except in that strength of Christ. And therefore the Godhead which a man may hope to possess, when at last through the "deifying vision," as St. Bernard calls it, made perfect in heaven is but the Godhead of Christ Who is the Head imparted to him as a member of Christ's Body. Christ possessed by nature what mankind can only possess by grace.

Christ, then, as Man is God; nor is He distinguished from the human race by the possession of two wills, one human and the other divine. Two wills and two natures of course He had; but so has every single man upon earth. Nor is this theory a novelty. It is taught not merely by a writer of such questionable orthodoxy as Eckhart, but also by his orthodox disciple Tauler; it is taught by Julian of Norwich when she says that there is in all men that shall be saved a will which never consented unto sin; and it is taught, in some form or other, by every man who has probed the mysteries of his own heart.

There is, in fact, besides the stream of temporal consciousness, existing as its background, or perhaps as its very nucleus, that timeless self (as it has been called) without which we cannot think or exercise the will or experience emotion. By virtue of this fact it is that there resides within each human heart a

heavenly principle which acts and knows itself and is revealed in every noble deed the man performs. So far as his life is good and true, to that precise extent does it express in outward actions this hidden principle of its being. This principle is the soul of all human goodness, most manifested where man is at his highest. And, since no life can be utterly without a single trace of good, therefore there is none but shows some feeble gleams of this pure glory ; but since, on the other hand, none on earth is perfect, therefore there is none in whose life it is fully expressed. But in Christ we see a perfect Human Life. His Human Nature, therefore, perfectly revealed this Divine Nature which was within and behind it. In His Human Nature the Divinity acted and knew Itself and was revealed. In His Human Nature It was (and *is*) truly and perfectly Itself.

The light of heaven strikes upon the edifice of the world ; but the building has no windows and all within is dark. Diffused though this bright element is through the air outside, it cannot work within and there fulfil its functions. Presently, however, the storms of time wear chinks and crannies in the walls, and at these points the fitful rays of heaven break in and pierce the general gloom.

Then some mysterious agency causes windows to appear, through which the sun now streams in upon the darkness in yet far greater volume. And the light in the building is the result of two things each impotent by itself—the beams which pour from the sun as it shines in heaven, and the windows which admit the golden tide to dispel the pent-up darkness.

But the revelation is very imperfect. The gloom,

in places lit with such a wondrous glory, is in others made yet more oppressive to the eye. Not one of the windows is perfectly clear, and some are so begrimed with dirt and filth that the light struggles through them to no purpose; and, where it penetrates, it is infected with the corruption of the panes and takes upon it a sickly hue.

Then there appears one perfect window in the walls. Its clear transparency is sullied by no dimness: its brilliant purity shows no single spot or stain. Through it the light streams from the heaven outside, untainted and untinged with any baser element. Radiant and pure the shining flood pours in upon the gloom, and fills the building with its vitalising influence. The gloom is gone. All things are drenched with glory. The prisoners who were sitting in the twilight can now bask in those life-giving beams, if they will come forth from the dark recesses into the full tide of that glorious sea of light. The shades of night are scattered: there reigns eternal day. In that bright day all men may dwell and rejoice in its holy comfort evermore.

Even so has this dark world from the first moment of time been surrounded by that uncreated Light which sought, in tireless patience, to enter its thick walls. Even so were all things always bathed in God, and yet at first God could not enter; for all was strife and primal chaos, and no ray of God's light was to be found. Then, as the strife gave place to harmony, at this point and at that God entered where He could, and, where He entered, rays of order and beauty began to streak the inky darkness.

At last, in course of long ages, man appeared. And

through his personality God's light streamed in still more. Yet human sin intermingled with the light, and hindered its bright beams and flecked and sullied their purity. Some light there was, here more and there less ; but the sinfulness of man, defiling its heavenly brightness, cast into this sad world a dull and lurid glare far worse than blankest darkness. Patches of beauty were, indeed, to be discovered where a soul appeared less clouded and defiled with sin ; but none of these could show a perfect loveliness : in all there was some baser element to pollute the heavenly light. And others again were so overlaid with sin that the light which poured through them ceased almost to be light at all, and only filled the world with greater horror as of some fearful nightmare.

And then came Christ the One and Only Perfect Man. Through His human Nature the heavenly light streamed in upon the world ; and, streaming in, it changed all things it touched. No longer now is the earth cut off from glad communion with the day : through His Humanity it now is filled with heaven. The Deity in which the world has been always bathed from the first beginning of beginningless time has now completely entered in ; and is now as completely inside as it has from the first been without. In Christ the earth is mere earth no more, nor yet is heaven mere heaven : in Him heaven finds its own true nature by being infused into the earth, and earth, too, finds itself by being filled with heaven : in Him the heaven and earth are one.

So, through the perfect Humanity of Christ, the whole world now is permeated with glory. And so there rises, and evermore shall rise, one great eternal

triumph-song from all those human hearts which, coming forth from the dark corridors and corners where as yet the light cannot penetrate the gloom, sit filled with an unconquerable exultation in His celestial light.

Before the light broke in, it was nothing to this earth. The light by itself was useless and could not perform its function. As it began to break in, it was doing its own proper work and so it became truly itself. Again, the window by itself is useless, and is nothing. Its only purpose is to admit the light. Only so does it perform its own work, and only so does it, therefore, become truly itself. The light cannot illumine the building except through the window, and the window cannot illumine the building except by admitting the light.

(God's Deity thus is nothing apart from His Humanity, and His Humanity is nothing apart from His Deity. It was necessary for God to be Man ; for only so could He be truly God.) Eternity is the goal and consummation of time, and therefore God must pass through time to possess His own Eternity. Love must give, and only in this act of giving does it truly possess ; and therefore God must give Himself, and apart from this act of service He cannot possess Himself. But God can serve us (and so serve Himself) in no other way than by being in this world in which we live ; nor could He, if wholly cut off from it, afford us any aid. To the exact extent to which He is not merely outside it but within, to that exact extent can He help us and no more. And this great fact we find in all our best experience. We find it in the beauty and the goodness which we see in this fair universe

and in all noble human characters ; we find it in the better instincts of our own hearts and in those mysterious impulses which lead us on to seek for and rejoice in that which is good. We find in all these ways that God is helping us ; and in all of these He works not outside the universe but literally within it. The splendours of the glorious creation are His Presence in the world, and the better instincts of our hearts are that same Presence at work within our being.

Therefore to give us a perfect help and service He must come at last completely into the world. He must become Man that He may be our perfect Example and our absolute Life. And God is Love ; and love must serve. Love is love so far as it gives itself for others, so far, and no further ; and therefore perfect love must give itself completely in its service for others, and only so is it perfectly itself. Thus God must give Himself completely, and only so is He God ; He must pass through time, and only so is He eternal ; He must as a Servant fulfil His course on earth, and only so is he Lord of Heaven ; He must be Man and nothing more than Man, and only so is He perfect God.

(Take away His Manhood, and His Deity is destroyed : He ceases to be God at all. Take away His Deity, and His Manhood is destroyed : it vanishes and utterly ceases to be.) Cut out from the earthly Life of Christ that infinite love which was, and is, His perfect Deity, and nothing at all remains ; for Christ's earthly life was love and nothing else. You cannot remove from it that perfect love, which is His Deity, and yet leave His Humanity behind any more than you can take the beauty from a picture and yet leave the

picture itself. (Christ's Humanity is the Humanity of His Godhead : His Deity is the Deity of His Manhood. His Godhead is human and His Manhood is divine. The beauty which shines through a picture, the meaning which appears through the words of a poem, are nothing apart from the picture or the poem, nor is the picture or the poem anything apart from them. The picture and its beauty, the poem and its meaning, form in each case one complete and utterly indivisible fact.)

And therefore Christ is eternally of one substance with His Father. This follows absolutely from the fact of His Perfect Manhood. For the only substance which God possesses is love ; and Christ, as Man, is perfect Love. He could not be perfect Love as anything else but Man ; and therefore, except by virtue of His perfect Humanity, He could not possess His perfect and eternal Deity.

(Christ, then, as perfect Man is perfect God.) And this fact brings Him down to this common earth of ours. But in this very moment that it brings Him to our level, it, by so doing, exalts Him far beyond our ken. Because He is infinitely near, for that very reason He is infinitely far. By His lowness He is exalted ; by the very perfection of His humanity He is above the whole human race. We cannot understand perfect Humanity ; we can but worship it without question. The Perfect Man is not one member of the human race ; He is its absolute Ground and Rule and Standard. On Him the human race must rest, and by the standard of His perfection it must be measured : He rests on nothing but Himself (even that ultimate Self of His which He revealed to us as His Father) and is

measured by no standard but Himself. The Perfect Man is absolute and is final: all else is relative. All men have life only so far as they draw it from Him. His Perfect Humanity differs from our imperfect humanity not merely in degree but in kind: the gulf between the perfect and the imperfect is not merely vast, but infinite. And hence, because Christ is perfect Man, for that very reason I cannot understand Him.

Shakespeare I can understand to a great extent. He has so wide a human sympathy that, if I am a man, I cannot fail to find in him something to which my mind will naturally respond. And yet, because the humanity of Shakespeare is so wide, therefore I cannot grasp it entirely. There are in his plays whole aspects and departments of life which are at present beyond my vision. Each time I read his works I see there more than I did before; but I shall never make my own the whole of their mighty secret. My little mind will never take the full measure of his great one. By his wide humanity he appeals to me: by that same wide humanity he eludes my complete grasp.

Beethoven, again, I can, in great measure, understand. His deep humanity appeals to that which is deepest within me. And yet I cannot fathom him, nor ever shall so long as I live upon earth. His music is too deep for me to plumb its furthest depths; it is too strongly human for my weak humanity to grasp. I shall not understand it wholly until I have felt all his emotions: not till then will my human personality be as rich as his. And that will never be in this earthly life. Beethoven appeals to me by the depth of his human passion: by that same human depth he

far surpasses me. Because his music is so deeply human, I admire it and can understand it in part: for the very same reason I cannot understand it wholly.

And yet neither Shakespeare nor yet Beethoven was perfectly human. Neither was a perfect man, for both were infected with the taint of our diseased humanity. Now Christ was, and is, wholly without the taint. Therefore He was, and is, Perfect Man. And, being Perfect Man, He is no mere enigma. I must seek and find in Him what is truest in myself; and, by His perfect humanity, He makes His appeal to all that is best in the human heart. But, being Perfect Man, He is the one great Mystery, far more beyond our grasp than any mighty genius. His perfection beckons to us, as the ideal cannot but beckon, and in so doing it eludes us as the ideal cannot but elude all reach of our imperfect mind. Because He is perfectly human, for that sole reason He is utterly incomprehensible. His human perfection separates Him from all the imperfect human race by a vast and infinite gulf which no human thought can span.

We may, then, reverently seek to appreciate that Life; and in part we may succeed, but we never shall completely. To think that because Christ's Deity is the Deity of perfect Manhood, therefore we can wholly understand Him, is a rash and impious folly. We shall wholly understand His perfect Humanity when we have learnt to weep His tears of heavenly sorrow, when we with Him have sweated drops of blood from sheer agony at the thought of human sin, when we with Him have died heart-broken at the spectacle of this world's evil, when we like Him have

conquered solely by patient meekness, and, having drunk to the bitter dregs a cup of agony compounded of all the sin and suffering of the whole creation, have fought, through an anguish which our minds cannot now conceive, to that eternal victory where pain is glorified into joy. If this privilege is, in some other world, ever to be ours, it will not be until we pass our earthly limitations and, by the grace of Christ, are transformed wholly into His Being.

I may, then, vaguely apprehend perfect Human Nature : I cannot wholly comprehend it.

A stump of a tree and a statue by Phidias have nothing, to all intents and purposes, in common. They belong to different spheres, and we cannot compare the two. The one is a piece of fuel, the other a work of art ; and the tree-stump when kindled heats the room as successfully as the statue adorns it. You cannot judge the former by its beauty, nor the latter by its power of giving warmth. The functions of the two things are separate.

But now carve a rough head upon the tree-stump, and at once the case is changed. The stump is now laying claim to be a work of art, and it may, therefore, now be compared with the statue. And when the two are thus brought together and judged by the same standard there is found straightway to be an immense gulf set between them. Judged by this common standard of æsthetic beauty the tree-stump is a far inferior thing to the statue ; nor can we any longer say that it serves its own purpose just as well as the statue serves another purpose of a different and higher kind. By using one standard for them both, we have put the statue far above the tree-stump. This common standard

is the very thing which causes the gulf between them.

So, too, if Christ's Deity consists in something other than the perfection of His Manhood, then He is an enigma and is out of touch with the human race. He is, then, so far, nothing to us, and we do not need Him. But if His Deity is the Deity of Perfect Manhood, then we try Him solely by that same test which we apply in judging all mankind. And thus, comparing Him with ourselves, we find that, through this very fact, He is infinitely beyond us. As Man He is divided from all men that have ever lived by an absolute and infinite chasm.

Add number to number and you get a continually increasing total. The amount still grows, and each term differs but in degree from that which went before and that which follows it. Continue the series to infinity. This is the goal to which the series was tending. But this infinity, when we, in thought, have reached it, is found to differ from all the terms of the series not in mere degree and quantity but in quality and in kind.

Even so it is in human life. Some men are better than others, and we could arrange them in a series. At the end of the series, and far beyond it, is that infinite human perfection towards which the series tends. That perfection is found in Christ alone, Who differs in quality and in kind from the whole of the human race.

And this is the teaching of the Lord Himself as to his own Person. He applies to Himself and to all mankind, the one test of divine sonship; and by that one and the same test He sunders Himself, the

perfect Son of God, from all the imperfect human race. For he speaks of God often as "My Father" and often as "your Father," but never as "our Father" (except when he bids His disciples use these words). Once, indeed, He is said to have used the phrase : "My Father and your Father,"¹ and this passage bears out the same great truth. The words are uttered after the work of Redemption is completed on the Resurrection Day, and they imply that God is now the Father of the human race, because of that work which has just been completed by Him Who is the only Son. They imply that His Sonship is absolute, and that the sonship of the human race is derived but from Him.

So, too, He says that by doing the will of God His disciples will become sons (*uiοι*) of their Heavenly Father.² But He Himself certainly does not become the Son of God, possessing, as He does, this title in an absolute sense. It follows that He is the Son of God because He absolutely and by His own perfect human nature always does the Father's will. "Become good men," He says in effect, "and you become the sons of God." If so, then, He is the One absolute Son of God by virtue of the fact that He is the One absolute, perfect Man.

That Christ is raised infinitely beyond the whole human race precisely by His perfect Manhood is a truth which comes out very plainly in a striking passage in the Fourth Gospel.³ On a certain occasion he makes a claim which the Jews regard as blasphemy. They understand Him to be claiming equality with God.

¹ St. John xx. 17.

² St. Matthew v. 45; St. Luke vi. 35.

³ St. John x. 22-39.

And Christ does not deny the charge. He accepts the position and substantiates the claim. But the argument He employs is most remarkable :—

“ Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods ? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken ; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest ; because I said, I am the Son of God ? ”

The argument amounts to this :—All noble thoughts and aspirations come from God ; and therefore all those men to whom they are sent have within them something of God’s own Being, and are to that extent divine. Hence the One Perfect Man, Whose whole life is without the slightest taint or touch of sin, is completely Divine and has the whole of God’s Being within Him. Christ thus claims to be Divine in nothing but in the fact of His absolute moral perfection.

Having thus explained that His Deity consists in nothing but His perfect Manhood, the Lord once more asserts His claim. And the Jews, on hearing it repeated, again take up stones to slay Him. Obviously, then, they understand Him, in the very moment of claiming a Deity which consists in Manhood, to be claiming a Deity which no man on earth possesses. They understand Him in the very moment of professing to be nothing more than Man to be professing that by this fact He is not merely a man. In other words, it is as Man that He is sundered from the whole human race ; as Perfect Man that He is the absolute and ultimate Being.

From those who reject the Fourth Gospel as a historical document this passage still demands con-

sideration. If it is nothing else, it is at least an expression of the ripest Christian consciousness. To those, on the other hand, who (with the present writer) believe the Fourth Gospel to be the work of an eyewitness of the events described, the passage is of the utmost importance.

Similar is the lesson to be derived from the Lord's use of the title "Son of Man." This was His favourite designation of Himself, and it is full of the deepest significance. The phrase has, in the first place, undoubtedly a Messianic reference. By using it Christ was claiming to be that transcendent Being to whom the Jews looked forward as the great Deliverer. By it He was thus claiming to be, not one member of the human race, but a Being beyond and above all mankind. On the other hand, the phrase has another meaning which alone fits all the passages in which it is employed. When Christ says that, because the Sabbath was made for man, therefore the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath,¹ a Messianic reference can scarcely be extracted from His words. And to call in the aid of the critical pruning-knife on this account appears an unwarrantable expedient, for there is nothing in the passage as it stands to suggest the need of this drastic measure. The truth is, that the theory which demands the exclusion of the words is not wholly satisfactory, but needs a little supplementing.

Now, there is only one interpretation which fits the passage in question. If the Sabbath is made for man, and therefore the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, the title Son of Man can here mean nothing else than "the Perfect Man." And such an interpretation

¹ St. Mark ii. 27, 28.

will be found to give an added significance to every other passage in which the title is used.

It is urged that such an explanation is impossible, for the whole conception is alien from Jewish modes of thought. The notion of an Ideal Man would be natural enough on Grecian soil, but was not likely to have arisen in Judæa ; and Christ's whole surroundings were Jewish and not Hellenic.

This objection would have some force if Christ were nothing more than one individual member of the human race. If he had been simply a Jew of a certain historical period, then He would, perhaps, have been limited almost entirely by the conceptions current in contemporary Judaism. But if, being Perfect Man, He belonged to no one time or nation, then where is the strangeness in His using modes of thought which were not limited by His actual surroundings ? He had a message for all centuries and for the whole human kind ; and, though that message was, for the most part, poured into the mould of current Jewish conceptions (since only thus could He make it intelligible, or, in fact, so far as we can see, first become conscious of it Himself), yet it could not be wholly limited by those narrow racial bounds. Christ was often trying to expand them, and perpetually He struggled against the petty national prejudices by which His hearers were tied. And thus, He often taught a message which at the time they would not understand. Yet the words fell into the unconscious depths of their hearts and there worked unseen and unfelt, suggesting more in some mysterious way than those who were thus being influenced by them could themselves understand, and dimly appealing, by their divinely human

truth, to that divine humanity which lies in man somewhere beneath the limitations of his narrow outlook. There the words lay and there they silently germinated in the dark recesses, until they brought forth fruit in due season, through no act of the conscious reason, but through the mysterious motion of some deep human instinct acting, none can tell how, by the help of the Holy Spirit.

So, then, Christ claimed to be the Ideal Man. The conception was not a Jewish one, and no man could comprehend its meaning. And yet it appealed, in those who would receive it, to an instinct of humanity deeper than their Jewish limitations. The words awakened in their hearts a response they could not themselves explain and of which they were hardly aware. And yet they were, in this unconscious way, being moulded and led towards the truth. Thus the title "Son of Man" means, on the one hand, a mysterious Being Who is beyond the limitations of this earth, and Who will at the last day come down from heaven to effect the great deliverance: on the other hand, it means, on the lips of the Lord, the Ideal and Perfect Man. And thus, by using this title as His peculiar self-designation, Christ claims to be above and apart from the whole human race precisely through the very fact of His perfect Humanity. As Perfect Man He is the ultimate Judge of the human race and the ultimate Standard by comparison with which every man is to be tested: as Perfect Man He is not merely an individual man, but is the absolute and final Goal of all things.

The Humanity of Christ is, then, the ultimate Mystery of the universe—a mystery which no thought will ever fathom. The Perfect Man is far beyond our

limited and imperfect grasp. He is not an enigma, for He appeals to the primary instincts of the human heart ; but He is, for that very reason, beyond all mortal comprehension. He is the one great Miracle, and cannot be explained by any known laws of evolution. The process of evolution, indeed, demands Him to give it a meaning ; and, while apart from Him it is but a broken fragment, in Him it finds a purpose, which it possesses so far, and only so far, as it tends towards Him. The series must be produced to infinity to be made perfect. Nevertheless that infinity, towards which it is tending, is not itself one term in the progression, but stands outside the limits as its completion and its goal. Even so, while Christ is needed if a purpose is to be read into the process of evolution, yet He is not one term in the process, but is its ultimate Goal and Crown, standing utterly beyond its limits, and being quite inexplicable by any of its laws. And hence it is, since He is the one great Miracle, that His physical life at every point displayed a miraculous element.

The process of evolution goes on from higher to higher stages. And at each fresh point that is reached it is found that a fresh law operates, and, by its operation, counteracts the laws which hitherto have been the sole factors in the development. It does not supersede them ; for they still are at work. But always they are made subservient to this new influence which uses them and modifies their results. You cannot explain life by the mere laws of mechanics ; for, though the mechanical law of gravitation is at work in the plant, yet the law of life uses and, by using, counteracts it. You cannot explain sensation and the power of independent move-

ment by the mere laws of plant-life ; for, though the basis of life is, of course, the same in the plant and in the animal, yet this common foundation, in the case of the animal, serves and, in serving, is modified by the laws of the nervous system. Again, you cannot explain religion, art and poetry by the laws of animal life ; for, though the brute and man possess, as a common basis, the same animal nature, yet in man this nature serves and is modified by the laws of his spiritual being, and hence arises that disturbing factor which makes human history the most complex of all subjects. The spiritual element in man obeys its own inexplicable laws ; and these laws, though but little understood, are seen daily modifying the action of all those which belong to the lower sphere of being.

To explain man, therefore, every kind of law is needed. His body obeys the mechanical law of gravitation, but this is in him superseded by the higher law of life. And the law of physical life is again modified by those of intelligence, will and emotion ; and these again by an ultimate spiritual principle of his being which bloweth where it listeth and no man can tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. Genius comes at the crest of a wave, and yet is not the mere product of the mounting waters. It obeys its own inward law, coming and going when it will, and cannot be explained nor understood.

Each natural law, then, must give way to a higher and more profoundly natural law as we rise in the scale of evolution. Now pass through all stages of the process and come to its ultimate Goal. Produce the whole of the series, in thought, right out to infinity. Its Goal is Christ, the infinitely Perfect Man. If the same

great law of the process is to hold good, it follows that in Him all the evolutionary laws, while they operate in His physical nature, will serve, and be profoundly modified by, some ultimate law beyond them. This spiritual influence, coming from that far region beyond the process, in which alone the process can find its ultimate point of rest, will counteract all natural operations, and cannot be explained by them.

And, just as Christ is Perfect Man, and as such transcends and far surpasses the whole human race, so is this law the ultimate law of Nature (for towards it the process of the world in some strange manner presses), and yet, by being perfectly natural, it transcends all natural law. The ultimate nature of things cannot, in fact, be explained by the known laws of Nature. It is not contrary to them, but it far surpasses their finite scope. "We may speak of God," says St. Augustine, "as acting contrary to nature when He acts in a way contrary to that which we know in nature. . . . But God no more acts contrary to that highest law of nature which is beyond our knowledge than He acts contrary to Himself. . . . Such things appear contrary to nature generally, not because they contradict nature but because they transcend the method of nature with which we are familiar."

Christ, then, as Perfect Man, transcended, by fulfilling, the law of our human nature. He, too, in the miraculous element of His Life, transcended, by fulfilling, the natural laws of the universe.

About one miracle a few words may be added. It is the miracle of His Birth.

If sin is not a reality, and if mankind are not so very bad after all, then the Virgin Birth is an impossi-

bility. But if there is such a thing as original sin, and if it is the hideous thing which the Christian conscience knows it to be, and if, moreover, Christ alone was pure and free from original sin, then the Virgin Birth falls naturally into its place. The great miracle was the sinless Life. This being accepted, the Birth was in any case a stupendous miracle. For, since the beginning of the world, nothing more astonishing (though nothing more natural and necessary) can ever have taken place than the birth of One free from original sin. It is not more difficult to believe that this moral miracle was accompanied by a physical miracle as well. It is, in fact, perhaps easier: the necessity of the case appears to require it. The physical miracle was the natural and necessary means by which the moral miracle was accomplished.

Nor does the Virgin Birth and Christ's freedom from original sin rob His Life of its true value for us as our Example and Pattern. Instead of making His temptation at all unreal, it renders it only more of an intense reality. The more spiritual a man's nature is, the more agonising is the temptation he is capable of suffering; and the hardest trial conceivable is not that of a coarser nature in its propensities towards vice, but such as a loving father might feel if he were compelled to leave his only son to die of thirst by the wayside because an errand on which hung the fate of thousands made it impossible for him to stop a single moment to give relief. Some such trial as this must have been Jesus Christ's when, desiring as He did to clasp the whole human race to His bosom, He was compelled for the time, by the exigencies of His mission, to work only amongst the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

In this great Miracle, then, of the one Perfect Man is to be found the one sufficient answer to the appalling riddle of the world. All human goodness is a partial answer, but the mind imperiously demands one that shall be complete. Evil is so horrible a fact that no imperfect goodness can ever give the final solution. Everything breaks down, and pessimism is the only possible result. Perfect human goodness alone is strong enough to stand the strain ; and that we find in none but Christ. He it was that, clasping the universe in His bosom, leaped the infinite and impassable chasm which separates this imperfect world from the perfect ideal, and bore it from the jaws of destruction into a region of safety. Or rather, since He did not pass from imperfection to perfection, but is eternally perfect and has been so from before the dawn of time, He stood, and stands for ever, on that far distant shore, and, by the attraction of His love, He drew, and ever draws, all created things towards their home of rest within His heart. And every higher impulse and every noble desire is but that mysterious attraction felt within the human soul. And He Who thus attracts mankind, in every age and race and creed, gives also His Holy Spirit Which can fly from this imperfect world to Him Who is perfection's very self, and bear the soul in which It works across the impassable gulf to that sweet rest in Him for which the whole creation blindly and unconsciously longs.

Thus is the Perfect Man eternal. Thus is He the ultimate Home of all things. Thus is He this troubled world's final and absolute Peace. Thus does He give a purpose to the whole vast world, and change our dull despair into a subdued yet undying hope.

A meaning can be read into the process, and it is found in the Human Deity of One who exercised and exercises over mankind a power consisting in no coercive force, but solely in His utter meekness and lowness of heart.

CHAPTER VIII

CHRIST THE REDEEMER

THUS in the sinless Humanity of Christ a perfect harmony has been found amidst this world's harsh noises. In the beginning of the evolutionary process nothing could at first be heard except a jarring din of battle and of strife. Then ever and anon, from different quarters, there fell upon the straining ear brief snatches as of some celestial harmony. Yet they were but broken fragments, and nothing was complete. They mocked the ear with the fair promise of a perfect beauty, and then were drowned once more amid the wild confusion. But ever as the process continued, the broken strains were tending to unite, and ever yet more and more to suggest the final music of the spheres. At last, in man, they seemed to promise that the perfect harmony would be achieved. There at last the jarring sounds would cease, and in that heavenly close the expectant ear would be for evermore at rest. But the promise was not fulfilled. True that the broken strains were less broken and more suggestive than they had ever been before; true that they seemed, yet more than ever, to be struggling in the vain attempt to utter some great theme: yet broken they still were; mere suggestions they still remained. They aroused a vague surmise and dim foreboding of something unimaginably

sublime, which yet they utterly failed completely to attain.

Meanwhile, throughout the process, as the fragments of harmony increased in beauty and in suggestiveness, the jarring sounds had been growing yet more harsh. They ceased now to be a mere chaotic noise, as more and more they tended to become deliberate discords of most painful hideousness. As the harmonious patches expanded and gathered purpose, so did the noise of confusion from amidst which the strains emerged cease to be a vague indefinite rumble in the background, and tended to gather an opposing purpose as, with its fearful shrieks, it broke into the heavenly symphony and marred its growing beauty. And thus in human history could be heard, along with lovely strains of fair, though broken, music not heard before on earth, a clang and discord so strident and so horrible that the strains of music could often not be heard at all.

And yet the heart refused wholly to despair, and still the ear with straining eagerness listened in one last hope. And, as it listened, there smote upon it at last the perfect music. So still, so calm, so heavenly that it was felt rather than heard, within the heart it sank and brought its healing message; and the heart, astonished, recognised it as the final Orphic song. The harsh sounds of earth could not interrupt its tones. By its very stillness it could be felt and known and recognised even while the ear was being assailed by those fierce and strident noises. No din could ever drown it, no force could make it cease. For it was beyond the reach of all noise and violence: it was the harmony of deep repose.

And in that silent music could be detected the whole deep music of the world. All the broken fragments which had emerged from the general din could now be recognised and appreciated at their own celestial worth. In them were now perceived the unfinished phrases of that great song which had at last fulfilled what they were struggling to be. And this celestial strain, by its inevitable beauty, by its mysterious appeal to the truest human instincts and by its power of completing all those broken fragments of melody, not only gives the mind a deep and tranquil satisfaction but also awakes within it an animated hope. Having once felt its power, though it be beyond our comprehension, yet we shall never cease to look for that far-off day when the jangling strings, which now produce harsh discords, shall by their very nature all vibrate responsive to its eternal tones. Having once felt its power we cannot cease to hope, with painful yet triumphant longing, that one day all may answer to its influence and may awake to lofty harmony and utter that great strain for which alone the strings are suited. Then, if that glad day should ever be, the mighty symphony, which is now complete in Christ, will be repeated throughout the whole creation ; and each will make his own, and utter for himself, the same eternal strains.

In Christ the broken music of the universe is made perfect and complete. His human Life gives to the whole vast process whatever purpose it is able to possess. So far as it tends towards Him and leads to Him as its great Conclusion, to that extent may a purpose and an aim be read into its strivings : so far as its does not lead to Him but struggles in other

directions, to that extent is it a blind and useless thing to which no aim or purpose can be attributed. And thus the mind, in seeking to unravel the world-process, must first, so far as possible, try to understand the human Life of Christ, and it must ask what is the still sad strain of victory which it hears that Life producing.

Until recent years the purpose of Christ's Life was generally sketched by criticism somewhat as follows: Christ, it was said, came forth to preach the Gospel of the heavenly kingdom; but, since men would not receive His message, He saw that all His labours for the good of mankind could only lead to the Cross. This martyrdom He willingly suffered rather than betray the high cause entrusted to Him. He sealed His loyalty with His blood, and thus He made the gibbet on which He died the symbol of His devotion to the cause of truth. The cross which He suffered was the measure of His sincerity. It became His chief credential and the final test of His great message. In it therefore not unfittingly was summed up His Life and teaching.

This unsustaining dish of rationalistic husks, so long accepted by starving human souls as a rich and satisfying repast, may now be said to exist no more. One blow from the hammer of Schweitzer's more consistent and rigorous criticism, and the dish lay in fragments on the ground while the husks floated idly down through the air and are now being carried away by the breezes. The notion that made of the Cross a mere afterthought is gone. Its place is taken, on purely critical and historical grounds, by a conception which regards the Cross as the very essence of that life.

Schweitzer has, then, disposed once and for all of this meagre fare. And he has done so on the grounds of historical criticism and through no principles of spiritual dietetics. In fact, the food he substitutes, though it is the true grain, may appear to many to be offered in a form which leaves much to be desired. The vital germ, which is the most nourishing part, has been removed, and only the outer portion remains. However, so far as it goes, it is valuable. It is at least far better than the dish of husks which it has replaced. Schweitzer has given us back the grain. This grain we may now examine and see what element it needs to make it complete. Meanwhile, for the previous unsatisfying chaff, let us be thankful that it can no more be offered us as nutriment. Schweitzer did but strike with his hammer on the dish, which pretended to be made of solid gold both strong and precious. A single blow was enough. The dish would not stand the test. It was but ill-baked clay after all. It smashed into a thousand shivers, and the husks without its support would not cohere.

We may, then, in trying to estimate the Life of Christ, take as our starting-point that which the consensus of Christendom has always known to be the beginning and the end. We may start with the Cross. The Passion was no afterthought: such a notion will not fit the historical facts. Historical criticism compels us to say that Christ's chief mission was simply to die. This was the great climax to which all His teaching and His manifold works of mercy led, this the essential purpose to which His Ministry looked forward from the beginning.

Thus, to understand this world we should need first to understand the One perfect Life which was lived by the Son of Man. And to understand that perfect Life, we should need to understand the Death which it was its especial mission to suffer. This no man on earth will ever fully do. The mystery of that Life and Death is far too great, too deep and holy for any sinful mind to grasp. The martyrs realised a large measure of its meaning who went in triumphant gladness to deaths of fearful agony : and yet even they could not sound the ultimate depths of that great mystery ; for even they, though being perfected through suffering, were not yet, and could not be, made actually perfect on this earth. Nothing but sinless perfection can fathom the mystery of a Perfect Life and Death : and therefore no man in this imperfect world can ever fathom the awful depths which lie in the Cross of Christ.

Nevertheless something of that mystery may dimly be perceived, even in this world, by every man possessed of a human heart which can respond to all things lofty and holy. Something may be surmised, and even experienced and known, by every man on earth to the exact extent to which he is true to his own humanity and strives to be sincere. Every human soul that has ever felt one touch of unselfish emotion, one touch of human love, one touch of a desire for what is high and noble, has so far drunk of the mystery which lies in the Cross of Christ.

Starting, then, with the conviction that the highest human experience is, here as always, the road which will lead to the final truth, we can at once reject the interpretation of the Cross which has often been so

widely accepted in the Church. It is misleading to regard the Death of Christ as a debt paid by God's mercy to His justice. The notion is legalistic and does not appeal to the natural instincts of the heart. And it is bound up with a conception of God's Nature which has been seen to be impossible. In God there is no distinction between one attribute and another : He is love and nothing else ; and His mercy is itself His justice, for both are love. Only love is merciful : and, since only love can do justice to the possibilities of good which lie hidden somewhere in all mankind, therefore only love is just. And hence the notion of a debt paid by mercy to justice, resting as it does on the belief that these two qualities in God are naturally opposed, is quite untenable, and must be abandoned. The Death of Christ can be interpreted by one conception and one alone. It is the conception of a God who possesses no quality whatsoever except that perfect love which is itself the only perfect wisdom, strength and justice, and the One eternal Reality. And if we fail, as fail we must, to understand the great mystery completely, it will only be because perfect love is something that no imperfect man on earth can ever wholly experience.

The Cross of Christ is the only source of human salvation. And in it God saves mankind, not by any legal fiction, but in the only way by which love, mere love, can possibly act. God saves the world simply by being love and by nothing else whatsoever. And love cannot but suffer. God must pass through pain at the sight of the evil which works such havoc in that world which He so infinitely loves. And, having no power but love, He cannot annihilate the evil which He sees :

He can but endure it, suffering His pain in His own unchanging patience. And His love, by suffering this pain, is tested, is drawn out to the uttermost, and thus is perfected. And in thus being made perfect it is man's complete salvation. For perfect love is a fount of eternal Life from which mankind may draw the healing streams to assuage all wounds and cleanse all leprous defilement, and make each human soul a new creation free from the old taint and corruption.

Man is a noble and a godlike being only so far as he, in patient love, has suffered ; and therefore God is God only in this fact that He, in perfect patience, has undergone all that the word suffering can possibly mean. If Christ had borne no more than the physical pain of His crucifixion, then He would not be God ; for His love would not have been tried to the uttermost and shown thus to be perfect. There would then come knocking on the doors of the mind the thought that though the test He stood was terrible and severe, yet, had it been made harder and had the pain been more intense, He might have broken down and His love might not have come forth victorious from the trial. Thousands of men, of women and of children have endured pangs immeasurably worse than the mere bodily pains of crucifixion ; and, if Christ has not suffered anything more than that physical martyrdom, then He has not drunk the cup of anguish to the dregs. Others have partaken of it deeper than He, and may, perhaps, therefore have a greater claim upon that reverence which we owe to suffering patiently and bravely borne.

So we should feel if the physical pain had been all. But our hearts assure us of the contrary. Man's best

experience shows us this—that, since Christ is perfect Love, He must have drunk far deeper than any imperfect man on earth of that bitter chalice. Since perfect love must suffer perfectly, He must have drained it even to the very dregs. And, compared with that complete and perfect draught, all other suffering ever borne by man is but as a sip from the goblet's topmost rim. All pain of body or of mind that has ever gone up to heaven in cries of anguish since the world began, all that has ever been endured in the last agonies of countless human beings as they writhed in the clutches of Nature's pitiless laws or as they have been slowly tortured by their fellow-men to deaths of loathsome horror, all that has ever been borne in the blind frenzy of absolute and blank despair by many a man who has longed in vain to die, all this, and infinitely more than all this, is contained in the agony of Christ, an agony which only perfect love could ever know. It belonged to Him alone : it was His fearful privilege.

Of some such mystery there is a glimpse in the Garden of Gethsemane. That great and awful dread, that wrestling of soul, that sweat of blood cannot be explained by the thought of any physical pain. Countless martyrs have faced without shrinking far intenser torments than those of the cross ; and if Christ flinched from His physical pangs, then He was not morally perfect. In a world so full of pain as this, none has the right to refuse the cup of his own individual suffering. Each man, by consenting still to live, and by welcoming whatever satisfaction life can bring, to that extent accepts a universe where countless numbers, every moment, are in pain. And there-

fore he cannot, without base and selfish cowardice, complain when the weight of suffering falls on his own head. A man is noble and strong so far as he is willing to accept with patience for himself those pains which some inevitably must undergo. And the best of mankind have even welcomed their own sufferings as a great and unspeakable privilege. By suffering they have felt themselves become incorporate into the secret being of the universe ; by suffering they have realised their kinship with the race and have learnt the mysterious touch of human brotherhood. The saints of God have often longed for pain, if so they might escape the cramping fetters of self and become partakers of that wider life which consists in self-forgetfulness. And, therefore, if Christ was morally perfect, He could not have drawn back from any pangs, however intense, such as could fall to the lot of one individual man. Christ, throughout His earthly life, above all the sons of men, accepted and affirmed this universe ; and while many were suffering each day, He possessed an inward peace of heavenly communion which was a ceaseless rapture of pure delight. That peace of His was a selfish thing unless He was willing Himself to undergo all that was being borne each day by so many human beings. It was a selfish thing if it could be interrupted and destroyed by any such pain befalling Himself, since it was not destroyed by the pain which daily smote on others. And, because He Who is perfect Love possessed this joy amidst a world of agony, therefore it cannot be supposed that He would have flinched before any possible torment of His own such as could have fallen to the lot of any individual human being.

The anguish of Christ must have been of a kind differing from all other human suffering and of a depth such as no thought can fathom. It was, in fact, infinite, and therefore nothing could possibly be added to it to make it any greater. And we may therefore believe that even the physical tortures of crucifixion, though they had been increased ten-thousandfold, could not have been felt for the extremity of that anguish which pierced His soul and innermost being. And if the Death of Christ had been a natural one and accompanied by no outward violence, this spiritual agony, in which all mental and physical suffering was contained, would still have been as great, for it still would have been infinite.

This divine suffering is beyond us : we cannot see into its depths. It is too profoundly human for our imperfect humanity to penetrate. And yet a glimpse is vouchsafed us by some words which the Lord is reported to have uttered before His Passion : "The Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." When, in some other world, Christ has given to us His own unfathomable hatred of evil, then we shall understand what He endured, but not before.

Physical pain is a dreadful thing, hated by all human beings and by all creatures that can feel. This fact is universal and admits of no exceptions. Some men there are indeed, less highly strung than their fellows, who, because their nerves are not responsive, appear indifferent to its pangs ; but these are no real exceptions to the rule. Not being so sensitive as other men, they do not feel it so acutely ; and their apparent indifference is due to the sole fact that they do not really know what suffering is. If they felt it

as much as others, they would dread it as much as those who feel it most. In truth every sensitive being naturally hates and dreads all physical pain to the exact extent to which he feels it.

A man will often, undoubtedly, come to welcome that which he naturally hates when he has learnt to see that it may become a discipline and may draw out all that is best in his character. A man will often come to welcome pain when he has learnt something of the lesson of that Faith which has consecrated all suffering and made it the indispensable condition of all blessedness. He will welcome it when the hand of God has changed it for him from a curse into a privilege, and made it a means of escaping from that principle of self which is at war with our higher being. Suffering, willingly and nobly borne, loses its horror, and becomes the chief jewel in the Christian's crown of glory. But this does not alter the fact that the thing in itself is hateful, and that all men shrink naturally from it with loathing and abhorrence.

And the reason physical pain is that which is more readily felt than any other kind, and is, generally, capable of being the most intense and agonising, is that we are all limited by the physical bodies which we possess.

Without a body a man could not be conscious of himself or of the world around him. His body is the instrument by means of which he acts and comes to know himself. And this instrument has its own laws and moves in obedience to its own rhythm, which few, or none, can altogether transcend. True that the body with its natural rhythm brings a man often into touch with that mysterious spiritual world which lies

around him ; true that in countless ways the senses each day bring fugitive gleams and suggestions of the things which are not seen : but more than that they cannot offer, nor can they pierce the impenetrable veil which keeps the two worlds asunder. They can but bring us to its borders and all too dimly suggest that invisible region which lies on the other side, when, by all that is fair and lovely in this marvellous world, by the strenuous activities which are necessary to sustain the body, and even by the natural instincts and passions which seem most of all to bind man down to earth and the world of sense, the heart that is within him feels itself gently stirred and gains a vague surmise of other worlds and of some unfathomed mystery beyond. So much our physical being can perform, but nothing more ; and all is as a shadowy dream. That something is there the heart may know, but it cannot define its nature : at least it cannot learn this from the organs of sense. Touch, sight, hearing and smell may all alike help to stir this indefinite feeling of the mystery that is around us and within us and in all things upon earth ; but, if we would learn the nature of this unknown Presence, we must consult the witness of our inmost heart. Our senses cannot answer our vague questionings.

The wheel of necessity in its revolutions brings us often to a point from which we gain a transitory gleam of some far region of eternal day ; but it is only a fleeting glimpse. The next moment the wheel has passed the zenith : it plunges down and carries us with it to the things of this earth, and will not let us gaze upon our true destiny and home.

Thus we are tied to this material body, which,

though it often impinges on a world of spirit, yet does no more than touch it. Thus do the chains cling fast about our feet and limit all our freedom. It is with the body that we start, and this is the first basis of our whole temporal consciousness.

Before man could appear upon the stage, there had first to come the brute; and each individual human being enters on his career as little or nothing more than an animal. Here is the foundation on which is gradually built the whole stupendous edifice of man's higher being, as from the mere struggle for existence (the law of all physical life) arises at length the family and hence all human affection. And thus the mighty fabric, which with its topmost pinnacles ascends towards the stars, begins from this earth and the world of sense, and here has the deep-laid basis on which it inevitably rests.

And of all our other senses touch is the ultimate substratum. This one sense is the very woof and texture of the physical nature, and all the rest are in origin but modifications of it. The eye and ear began as mere spots which were peculiarly sensitive to external stimulus, and still, in the completed organs, sight and hearing rest on a basis of touch. Vibrations are conveyed to the optic or the auditory nerves; these nerves respond, and the result is that we can hear and see. Touch, then, is the fundamental sense upon which all our conscious personality has been formed. And the whole struggle for existence which has brought the world into being and enabled it to continue, the whole of that instinct of self-preservation without which no animal could survive the dangers which surround it, is to be explained by the natural avoidance of all that

will cause any pain or discomfort to be experienced by this tactful sense.

And it is because the sense of touch is the foundation of all our conscious life that physical pain is so dreadful a thing and is naturally shunned by all. Physical pain is a discord felt in this foundation of our consciousness. It pierces the very root of our existence, and violates the primary instinct of all sentient life.

And yet there have been found many upon earth, who, having learnt, by the higher instinct of the heart, something of those eternal moral verities which are the very breath of all our spiritual being, have endured the utmost agonies of physical torture rather than, by denying a cause which is sacred to them, violate this ultimate law of their being. Such heroic souls are a standing witness to the fact that man, through the grace of God, may be stronger than the wheel of necessity to which he is bound. They prove to an astonished world that, even in this life, and in spite of his fleshly fetters, man may attain to something of his own true freedom, and may actually live, though with difficulty and struggle, in that other world of the spirit which is his true and ultimate heritage.

Now in that spiritual world Christ perpetually dwelt. He used His growing physical nature as a vantage-ground from which He could, as He rose from stage to stage of human development through childhood, boyhood, youth and maturity, see wider and wider expanses of that eternal inheritance which was His by nature. No veil of original sin came before His eyes to cut off the fair kingdom from His view. The vision, with Him, was absolutely clear, and, as He grew in wisdom, He was mounting from rung to rung of the ladder of His

physical nature, and at each step the expanse presented to Him stretched wider into the infinite. Then came the final stage at His Baptism. He had reached the topmost rung, and from the vantage-ground of His earthly being He leaped to the final point of spiritual growth. And, leaping far beyond this earth, He carried with Him that body the ladder of whose development He had been climbing. His physical nature was to Him no obstacle. He transcended it, and, by transcending it, He changed all its vital forces into the obedient ministers of the spirit. His body was not bound by the ordinary laws of physical life. It naturally obeyed them, but it could at will rise above their limits. It had been raised on to a higher plane of being, and was become the faultless instrument of His Spirit, which, in complete obedience, it could perfectly express. Hence, therefore, all the miracles which fill the Lord's life on earth. The rhythm of the body did not, in His case, hamper, even while sometimes helping, that of the Spirit; rather it was itself transformed into a spiritual rhythm.

Thus, while Christ consented to obey the natural laws to which all physical life is subject, He had, even by obeying them, left them all far behind, and possessed a transcendent abiding place in the spiritual world. That was His home and His life; that was His consciousness; there He had His Being, in those still regions where He dwelt eternally and ever more shall dwell beyond all touch of time and change; that was His ultimate existence. He had entered into full possession of His eternal heritage, and His physical nature had ceased (we may believe) to be the absolute foundation of His consciousness, and had been changed

into an obedient instrument. It had become the superstructure which was an outward token of those hid foundations on which it rested. In Him the whole of that natural life, which has arisen on earth from the struggle for existence, was reversed : it was turned upside down, and so attained its true position. The foundation had become an appendage, a valuable and even a necessary one it is true, but still an appendage : the superstructure had become the foundation and the whole reality. And whereas, for the whole human race, the physical body is generally the primary fact which cannot be transcended or forgotten and from which man cannot get away, while in some men it seems to be the whole of life and to leave room for nothing else, in Him the one primary fact was His spiritual nature. The body was transcended, and was only not forgotten because it was made wholly subservient to the commands of the spirit. There was no room for any life except that of this higher kind : other things had no place. They were not, indeed, excluded, but they were caught up and transmuted by the spirit until they, too, became something spiritual.

Such a state of being is, of course, beyond our understanding, though some brief and fitful glimpses of it appear to have been sometimes vouchsafed to the most highly favoured of the saints. In talking of it we are as those born in exile, forming dim conjectures of a distant home which they have never seen. Nevertheless it appears plain from the Gospel narratives that such was the earthly life of the Son of God.

Now, since Christ dwelt wholly in the spirit, and since that was His very Being and the foundation of all His supernatural consciousness, it follows that the

greatest possibilities of pain must for Him have lain in that spiritual region. The primary natural instincts of mankind are physical ; and therefore physical pain is naturally dreaded by us all as a discord which goes to the root of our life. Our Lord's primary instinct (if the phrase may be used with reverence) was wholly spiritual, and therefore spiritual pain must have been for Him the one naturally dreadful thing. And, as His spiritual nature was (and is) infinitely more intense than any physical nature of man can possibly be, as it was the one ultimate Reality of which all physical life is but the meagre shadow, so must spiritual pain for Him have been infinitely greater than the last extremities of any physical torture can possibly be for us. This is a mystery. We cannot understand it, for the mind of sinful man cannot understand moral perfection. If we could fathom the mystery, it would not be a mystery, and therefore it would not be true. We can see that it must be so ; and, seeing this, we can but accept it as the blind accept the fact that there is a thing called light.

And yet we can accept it not in utter blindness. Some faint streaks of twilight we can see, enough to assure us of that infinite blaze which is beyond our powers of vision. Each man, to the exact extent to which he is not wholly selfish, can peer some little distance into all things divine and can therefore have some insight even into the mystery of Christ's Passion. Are there not, in fact, upon this earth some who suffer a peculiar pain solely because there is within them, struggling feebly through much rank undergrowth of their baser selfish nature, a heavenly seed of something that is not base ? To such men has been granted a

sense of the grandeur which belongs to each man as an immortal spirit, and they have been filled with a love for the human race which has irradiated the whole of life. Man as man is precious to them, of whatever nation or belonging to whatever age : in spirit they clasp the whole human race to their heart with the bonds of a boundless love. All men are to them their brothers, and the sense of this great fellowship has filled their lives with gladness. Troubles of their own—pain, disappointment, failure—may have fallen to their lot, but these things they have been strong to endure ; for this wide-embracing love for all humanity has brought into their being a deep and holy joy before which their own personal sorrows have seemed to be as nothing. The beams of human brotherhood have shed a warmth within their hearts and have melted with this cheering influence all the griefs which have held them as in frozen bands ; and their love for mankind has been to them an inward source of power, sustaining them with strength to face their lot with a cheerful and triumphant courage.

Thus have they been upheld through many a bitter crisis ; thus have they marched undaunted through many a buffeting storm. But then they have suddenly become conscious of the unutterable ills under which the whole human race on every hand is groaning. Like a thunder-clap has burst upon them a sense of the hideous things which have been ever since the dawn of human history, and which still continue and will never wholly cease so long as the world shall last. They have realised, with a startled sense of shuddering horror, the appalling sufferings man has borne, and still must bear, at the hands of his fellow-man or

in his ceaseless struggles against the iron laws of Nature. By day and by night there have sounded in their ears the shrieks of human agony rising from a tortured earth to a pitiless and adamantine heaven. They have felt the callousness, the cruelty, the indifference to human claims which stain with foulest blots each page of man's dark history. They have felt how this godlike being with all his glorious possibilities sinks often to a level far below the brute, and how the record of humanity is too often a reeking tale of mere wickedness and crime.

All this has been brought home to their thoughts by the very strength of their love for the human kind. Had they cared nothing for their brother man, it would not have mattered to them though man has suffered, and still must suffer, things which the mind dares not to contemplate. Had they cared nothing, it would not have mattered to them though man is a moral wreck and failure. The tragic futility of the whole black story would have left them unconcerned. But their sense of human brotherhood has quickened each responsive power, and has made them feel with bitterest grief the world's vast suffering and sin. And thus that love for man, which had at first been the only source of their profoundest joy, has now overturned upon them a boiling cauldron of molten agony which has seared and scorched their souls with an inexpressible horror. Then has the whole sky seemed changed into burning copper and the world into brazen hammers battering upon the brain ; then has the heart turned sick with sorrow and life become an intolerable anguish.

And yet, after the first shock of blank despair,

they have dared once more to hope. For they have felt that love, if it were truly strong with the strength of its own intensity, could still support them to the end and could still remain unshaken. Love, and that alone, can hope when all hope seems lost ; for, as he whose love is strong can bear his own individual sufferings, so can he by the same strength bear the sufferings of those he loves, knowing that they too, by that same strength of heavenly love, if they possessed it, could bear their sufferings themselves. And love can bear the degradation of mankind, for by its own inward light it can still see the hidden possibilities of goodness which nothing can destroy. And thus there dawns upon the mind a vision of some distant region, far beyond the intervening blackness, where, through the very intensity of human love, tranquillity may once again be found. That region we can dimly see ; but we cannot reach to it in this life. Within its shores there is a love so perfect that, if we possessed it, we should rejoice to suffer the bitterest agonies which can torture this sensitive frame. For it is love's privilege to suffer ; and the more it suffers the more it knows its own deep hidden powers. And only because we should there through perfect love be able to rejoice in our own sufferings should we, through the same perfection of love, be enabled to rejoice amidst the sufferings of others.

That state is far away : in this life we can gain no more than the merest hint of its nature. And yet we can know that it exists beyond this imperfect world, and towards it we look with unutterable yearning as our being's final home. There only can be found complete tranquillity for this uneasy heart of ours ; there

only can be attained a joy made absolute. Meanwhile that peace of God which can warm our sad being here on earth, and that strength by which we may stumble blindly on, comes from the knowledge of a passionate faith that such a state of glory, unutterable, unattainable, incomprehensible to us at present, does on the final planes of life exist.

Now that true nature of ours, which is so utterly beyond our powers of imagining, is precisely what Christ, by sheer stupendous miracle, possessed on earth and perfectly fulfilled. In Him was that perfect love, nay He was, and is, Himself that Love in which all self is utterly done away. And in this fact is contained the whole mystery of the Passion.

Christ loved the human race with an infinite and burning love which none but He has ever fully known ; and this was the source of that peculiar joy which shines forth from all His earthly life. Having this love within His heart, He possessed the one true happiness ; having it, He found within Himself a peace which this earth cannot give nor yet can ever destroy. By this pure love He lived in heaven even while He passed through the experience of earth : it filled His human soul with the tranquil stillness of eternity.

But this mysterious love, while it brought Him His perfect happiness, brought also a peculiar pain. It was love that wrung from Him the bitter tears He shed at the grave' of Lazarus or over the doomed city of Jerusalem ; and, though the love was yet stronger than the sorrow, and though beneath the human tears there was still that Divine tranquillity which was deeper than the pain, yet the pain was caused by that very love in which His tranquillity consisted.

His love it was that bared His soul to receive the biting wounds.

There was, in fact, all through His life upon earth a dark, mysterious background of pain, from which, for the most part, He turned away because His hour was not yet come. The infinite love which sustained Him over the rough and painful paths of this earth would one day bring Him to a fiery furnace of bitterest agony, through which it would impel Him to pass. He knew it, and pressed on. When the hour was come He would meet it.

The hour came when, in Gethsemane and on the Cross of Calvary, He consented to face all the facts of evil in its completeness. No longer now did He turn His eyes away : the time had come for the last great assault. His infinite love, which had been the cause of His perfect joy, was now the cause of a pain as perfect—an infinite pain to which nothing could be added, for it contained all agony that can ever be conceived. Love had filled His chalice with the wine of life : love now turned all that wine to wormwood. He felt even as His own all the agony that has ever been suffered or can be suffered upon earth, and all the sin that has ever been, or can ever be, committed. And therefore He died, as the medical evidence would seem to show, not from the physical cause of crucifixion, but from sheer horror and a broken heart.

And in that moment of His Death, His victory was made perfect. For perfect love could bear even this vast anguish and, conscious of its own eternal being, could remain firm in the very fact of being crushed. Therefore He died with that strange cry of triumph in which all human agony is changed into

the crowning glory of an infinite love which has, through suffering, attained to its own complete perfection. Infinite love entailed an infinite suffering, enduring which with its own infinite patience it was, by this means, made perfect.

God's redemption of the world is His goodness, and is nothing else. We are weak and sinful, and this fact shuts us out from our own true life. To attain this joy for which we are made, we must expel the sin that is within us and must be made strong. And this we can attain in one way alone—by drawing fresh strength and goodness from God in Whom all strength and goodness dwells. But if the goodness of God is to suffice for all our needs, it must itself be perfect; for we cannot be perfected by anything but perfection's very self. And therefore the goodness of God must be shown to be wholly perfect in order that it may be our great Redemption.

But this cannot be without a testing. Nothing good can show its goodness, or even possess it, in any other way. All life must meet with opposition; nor can it otherwise act and awaken into being its slumbering powers, and so be truly itself. The muscles of the body must be trained by overcoming difficulties, and by this means alone can they be exercised and develop. The mental powers, again, must grapple with intellectual problems, or else they cannot reach their own proper stature. So, too, must moral goodness meet with opposition, and, by struggling against difficulties, it is evoked and brought to its completion. Love, to be truly and completely itself, must endure to the uttermost the temptation to be untrue to its own nature—must be brought face to face with the

full fact of evil ; and only by enduring such a searching test can it exercise and possess its own inherent strength. All love, all human goodness, is strong and is complete only in so far as it has endured temptation and has emerged with unbroken firmness from the crushing trial.

And therefore perfect love must endure a perfect temptation, and must by facing all that is contrary to itself, be infinitely tried ; nor can it, in any other way, be perfect. And such a temptation and a fiery trial of love was the Passion of Christ. At the beginning of His ministry we are told that He was tempted in the wilderness. And the essence of that mysterious experience was this : Christ was tempted to use the earthly methods of violence and compulsion for the accomplishment of His heavenly purposes, instead of relying on no weapons but those of patient love. And this was, in the main, a temptation to despair. If the truth could not prevail by its own inherent goodness, if it needed any other weapons to achieve its final victory, if, indeed, it could achieve or could accept any victory of an earthly kind, then it was utterly weak. And hence to rely on any methods than the innate self-witness of the truth itself would have been nothing else than a want of belief in its power.

This temptation Christ faced in the wilderness, and, brushing it aside, He conquered it by the mere strength of love. The tempter departed from Him, though not, as yet, for ever, but only, we are told, until a convenient season. That season came in the Passion, when, in unfathomed agony, the Redeemer of mankind met finally and completely the temptation to despair. This is a temptation which in some degree

has come to many a human heart. The facts of life are so terrible that many a man has been tempted to give up all hope and to sink into the black gulf of utter pessimism. And those who have felt this temptation with the most terrific and crushing force have been able to meet it, if by God's grace they have done so, through nothing but the strength of a love which cannot cease to hope. Having learnt something of the infinite worth of the human soul, they have found this conviction within them yet remaining through the struggle. And thus the temptation to despair has been the measure of their love; the severity of the test has shown the strength of the love which could withstand it.

Now, this testing in us never reaches the utmost limits of all possibility: it is never so intense that it could not, in other and nobler natures, be yet more intense and searching. But in Christ it reached the utmost limit. In Him it was so intense that nothing could be greater: in Him it was utterly perfect, complete and infinite. And thus His love, enduring this infinite test, was shown forth to the utmost in its infinite strength and majesty.

Love is joy; and the deepest joy cannot exist at all apart from sorrow. This truth can be felt in all great works of art, and is the very life of all that is best in poetry and music. The intense and transcendent joy expressed by some movements of Beethoven's sonatas owes its great power to this one fact, that it is a joy consisting not in any freedom from pain but in pain suffered, conquered and transmuted. Beside such deep and holy passion mere mirth and merriment is powerless to touch the heart; nor will he who has felt

the joy of sorrow as it throbs through all the noblest artistic creations ever be satisfied with joy of any other kind. None other is worthy of the name.

And since God is love, therefore God possesses eternally perfect joy in the unchanging and infinite goodness of the ever blessed Trinity. God is a Trinity because He is perfect love; and therefore the Holy Trinity is one perfect and ineffable bliss. And that bliss consists, not so much in the absence of pain, but rather in the victory over all its pangs. In the eternal joy of the Trinity all pain is, not avoided, but overcome and transmuted into glory; for only thus can joy be perfect and therefore truly itself.

But eternity is not independent of time: it is time's crown and goal. God must, therefore, pass through time to attain to His own eternal Being. And, in this passage He must experience the pain as untransmuted pain. Only thus can He transmute it, and, by it, attain to His own perfect bliss.

So it was that God passed through a human life; and that in the experience of Jesus Christ was contained, within the limits of this earth, the whole Being of the Blessed Trinity. So it was that He, through His infinite love for His Heavenly Father, possessed on earth a heavenly joy. So it was that, even when alone, He was never alone, for His Father was with Him. So it was that He had meat to eat which His disciples knew not of, for his meat was to do the Will of His Father and to finish His work. So it was that He lived not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. And so it was, we may believe, that, even when He wept by the grave of Lazarus or over the doomed

city of Jerusalem, He yet possessed an inward peace, in that blessed communion with His Father, which sustained Him amidst His tears.

Had the sense of that heavenly fellowship been continued to the end, we cannot doubt that it would have taken away all the bitterness of His anguish. The physical pain would, of course, have been but light and easy through the feeling of His Heavenly Father's presence ; and even the bitter agony of soul arising from the sufferings and the sins of the human race would have been alleviated by that sweet consolation and would have lost its sharpest terror. It was necessary, therefore, that Christ, to be tested to the full and to drink the cup of pain to the very dregs, should consent to forego that sense of His Father's love which had sustained and comforted Him throughout His Ministry. Before He could overcome pain and transfigure it into rapture, He must first experience it in all its fearful horror. He must feel it, not as the condition of His bliss, but as itself—as untransmuted pain. Therefore He turned His eyes away from the brightness of His Father's face, and, unsupported by the sense of that companionship, He gazed full upon the hideous spectacle, alone and bereft of all that could sustain Him. Otherwise there could not be such an unrelieved and absolute torment as He must undergo before His victory was achieved. Hence arose His cry of desolation upon the Cross, and hence the hidden agony which broke that sacred heart.

In that cry of desolation were summed up all the possibilities of all human pain ; and in that cry of triumph which followed it are contained all the possibilities of joy. The joy could not be achieved until

the pain had reached its furthest limit; for the joy consisted simply in pain endured, and so, by patient suffering, overcome. It was thus necessary for Christ to suffer and so to enter into His glory.

And, because in the Passion of Christ we see perfect joy attained through perfect suffering, therefore all human life and experience, all poetry and all that expresses the deepest instincts of the human heart, is a prophecy that points to this great Sacrifice and finds in it a full and perfect meaning. All human suffering now is changed to something holy. All agony of mind and body may become but the means towards attaining a heavenly triumph. The Cross of Christ has transformed all things upon earth. It gives a fresh significance to human pain, and floods it with a heavenly glory.

And since all things now become a prophecy of this great and final event, therefore Christ could, after His Resurrection, open the minds of His disciples that they should understand the scriptures, and could show how the utterances of the great Hebrew poets and prophets were perfectly fulfilled by His Death. Those ancient writers had learnt, and with growing clearness taught, this great eternal truth, that love must suffer, and only by suffering can be truly itself: and this unchanging truth was finally fulfilled in Him.

This, then, is the means by which the world was redeemed; this was God's mighty triumph. The Redemption is the boundless love of God which, suffering a boundless pain, passes all limits and floods to full perfection, and, being thus made perfect for evermore, is an exhaustless fount of healing for the whole human race.

And the pain was all spiritual, for no physical torture could be intense enough to be a perfect test. This was the essential fact, and the physical circumstances of crucifixion were but an accidental accompaniment. None the less we may be grateful that Christ used the malice of His persecuting foes and brought out of it a blessing. Had He died without any circumstances of outward violence, His infinite agony would, indeed, have been as great, and His work of redemption as complete, but it would not have possessed such a power of capturing the mind as belongs to the outward details of the Crucifixion. That mysterious mental agony is beyond our range of feeling. We need the Cross with its appeal to the senses to make anything of Christ's redemptive sufferings a reality to our imagination; and, without it, we should entirely lose our hold of the mighty truth. And thus here, as so often, God has turned into a blessing the vilest works of darkness, and has brought a wondrous good out of that which is wholly evil.

God redeemed the world, then, in the only way that love can ever work, which is by patient suffering. And this, because it is the only method of perfect love, is the method by which God works throughout the whole creation. It has been shown that He has formed the universe in no other way than this. Instead of bringing it into being by the mere irresistible fiat of His will (a thing which He could not do because His power does not consist in force), He has fashioned it slowly through countless ages by enduring the action of an opposing power of brute force, and so, through the patience of mere love, guiding

and attracting the struggling elements into conformity with the law of order. And so in that supreme work which crowned the whole vast process He redeemed mankind, not by any arbitrary edict abolishing all evil (a thing which was, once more, impossible to an omnipotence consisting in nothing else than love), but solely by enduring the evil in the firmness of meek and gentle love, and so, having stood the immeasurable test, coming forth from the fiery trial with His infinite goodness made for ever perfect. In this great act the omnipotence of God was at last completely manifested. It attained its perfect and absolute completion in that moment when He died broken-hearted on the Cross. The fruition of the fact was, indeed, postponed for another forty days: the fact itself was now accomplished.

And, as the same great method of God's work is seen to apply throughout the whole creation, and finally to be fulfilled by the Passion of Christ, as the process is all one from beginning to end, and in Christ's Death is made complete what in the earlier stages of the scheme is but begun, so do we gain from the Cross of Christ the one great explanation of the universe. The process of the world, in so far as it has a meaning at all, can find it only in Christ; and the meaning of Christ's earthly life is all contained in His death. And His death is an act of redemption. Therefore, so far as the whole process of the world bears any meaning at all, it is itself a process of redemption. This thought alone will give it any purpose, and will at last unravel the entangled riddle.

The whole process of evolution is itself one mighty redemption wrought out by the meek suffering of a

perfect love which, strong in that strength which seems like weakness, can bear the assaults of all its foes unmoved, unconquered and unchanged, and can by its own inherent patience draw, even from the things which seek to crush it into nothing, the elements of its own eternal victory.

CHAPTER IX

REDEMPTIVE CREATION

SUCH is the deathless triumph-hymn which now is heard reverberating through the dim corridors of time. Such is the Orphic song which, felt above the loud discordant noises of the world, can touch even these with heavenly beauty and soothe the heart that shrinks from their harsh uproar. Now the vast process all seems trying, even with its inarticulate cries of anguish, to frame the mystic term which floats, the burden of the pæan, upon the living air. Now creation's myriad voices all seem labouring together to take up the strain, and, to the utmost bounds of the illimitable universe, to shout the one great word : "Redemption!"

We hear the sound, and are astonished : we catch the mystic word, and are oppressed with joy. But there is no time for lingering on the road : our task is yet unfinished. We must yet arise and track the gathering echoes which, starting from their slumbers, wander through the deep-drawn caverns of the world. We must search out by what mysterious power of sound these granite walls, kissed by the encompassing harmony, awake forthwith to answering life and tremble into music. We must examine the substance of the rock to find if possible its nature and its properties. Redemption being the master-principle which permeates the universe, it remains

to see how the stupendous process finds here its explanation.

The conception of the universe which has been hitherto accepted almost without question by Christian theology has been somewhat as follows: God first created the world, which then, through the sin of Adam, went astray; and therefore, to remedy this lapse, He afterwards performed another work, the work of atonement. In the first place, then, He made the world; in the second place He redeemed the world which He had made.

Such a conception is impossible from every point of view. It rests on the theory of a "fall," and must disappear with it. Since there never was a "fall" there never was a break in the process of the world; and therefore all God's work in the universe is one. Precisely the same process which we see in the creation of the external fabric is repeated in a more marvellous and vital manner in the spiritual world and in all human history.

Again, the conception of a creative work the defects of which were afterwards rectified by a work of redemption, besides being incompatible with the facts revealed by science, rests on a rotten metaphysical foundation. God, it was thought, showed His power in creation and His love in redemption. "Look at the world," we were told, "with all its stupendous forces and marvellous arrangement, and you can see there the traces of intelligence and of irresistible might; in a word you find there God's omnipotence. But, on the other hand, you do not always discover His love, but often, instead, a thing that looks like hate. The first volume, therefore, needs a second to complete it; and

that sequel is to be found in the Cross of Christ. There you can learn that the Being Who possessed the power to create possessed as well the wondrous love to redeem what He had made."

This will not do. The theory of a Being possessed of different attributes is a vain delusion. God's power, it has been shown, is nothing else than His love ; and hence the notion of a Being Who by His power creates and then by His love redeems cannot possibly hold together. Bereft of its foundation, it tumbles to pieces through its own natural incongruity.

And its collapse is an immense gain to theology. It is hard to discover any inherent religious value in the notion of a mere creator introduced as a *deus ex machina* to explain the existence of the world. Mere creation, of the kind imagined by semi-deistic theology, though it may, indeed, be made to subserve a moral end, has in itself no moral quality whatsoever ; nor can it, as such, claim our worship or even our respect. And theology used to ask us to believe that this was the first and essential work of God. Creation was, it said, the all-important thing and covered the entire original plan, the Redemption being a kind of after-thought necessitated by the fact that this first scheme had somehow been disorganised. And we were told that, but for this disorder, we should not have known to the full the love of God ; for, while we should have seen His power and should, from this, have inferred His benevolence, the fullest manifestation of His love would not have been given, as being itself no part of the original design.

Such theology as this needs no criticism.

In this, then, as in most theological errors, the

root of the mischief lies in the false conception of omnipotence. Get rid of this intruding element and everything falls into its right place. If God has no power but a power consisting in love, and if love can act in no other way but by its own peculiar method of patient suffering; if therefore the world-process began in nothing but evil and has been infected with this taint throughout its long career; if consequently there never was a "fall," but in human history and in the salvation of mankind and of each human soul God has been acting in precisely the same way that He employed when He was bringing the world into being; if there has been no break from beginning to end of the process and no distortion of something that was originally created good; if, on the contrary, each thing was from the first more or less distorted, and if God has produced all the goodness in this mingled web of good and ill by no compulsion but solely by attraction and by being what He is: then all things are plain and clear, and all science, all history, all human experience, every fragment of the vast perplexing riddle, will find its true solution in the Cross of Christ. The Death of Him Who is Himself eternal God is the final creative act, and creation is itself nothing else than Redemption.

Creation, Redemption, Sanctification are all one and the same indivisible fact; for the Father, the Son and the Spirit are all One indivisible Reality. The world, in being created, is being redeemed; and no man's individual redemption will be complete until he is wholly sanctified.

All theology must start with a mystical experience, and, in fact, should be merely an attempt to explain this

experience and to make it intelligible and coherent. If it starts from any other point it is completely futile. And hence the weakness of the crude conception of omnipotence, a conception which certainly did not originate in any spiritual experience, but in an utterly unmystical notion derived from the natural world. Recognising experience, then, as the only basis of all heavenly science, we naturally look to see what light this fact will throw on the present question.

St. Paul's theology all began with the fact of his conversion. He felt and knew within his heart that the Cross of Christ had redeemed him. The power of Christ's Passion and Resurrection is the great theme of all his epistles; and in this thought is contained the whole of his burning message. Starting with this principle of his inward life, he, in his later epistles, applies it to the whole great system of the universe and builds on it his conception of the entire creative process. He knows that Christ is the only source of all his own spiritual life; and hence he knows by mystic intuition that Christ is the only source of all the life which flows throughout the world. None but the ultimate Fount of all existence, none but the animating Principle of the whole creation, could have brought to him, and been in him, that energy which works within his soul. If Christ is the Redeemer, it follows, by that logic which to the mystic and the saint is beyond all argument and question, that Christ is also the Consummation of the whole creative process and the Power by which it moves. All things are therefore summed up in Christ: He is the Head of the whole creation and its one guiding Principle. And, as such, He is able to be the Head of that new creation of humanity redeemed in Him. Christ is the Origin

of all life ; and is, in fact, the Life itself, in Whom the fullness of all Deity dwells. As energising Life, He is the root and ground and also the final flower and fruit, of all creation : as energising Life, He is, with equal right, the great Redeemer of mankind.

Thus, in St. Paul's theology, creation and redemption are two different stages in the same great fact, and the one presupposes the other. No doubt the Apostle believed in the doctrine of the "fall," and into this mould he was obliged to fit his mystic religious convictions. But that does not diminish the value of his conception. Mystical theology is eternally and absolutely true, and can always, in proportion to its intense reality, rise superior to the transitory elements by which it may be accidentally encumbered. In spite of the fact that St. Paul accepted the "fall," there is not a word about it in the later epistles, and he could have written these just as they stand if he had rejected the notion completely. They are the outcome of his own personal experience, and therefore they express a truth which is final and ultimate.

We see here the radical difference between the doctrine of original sin and its legendary accompaniment. The former is the main support on which the whole machinery of these epistles rests : the latter is no integral part of the Pauline system, and, though it is attached to the outer frame (for there St. Paul had put it some years before when constructing the machine, and there it must be presumed to remain now that the structure is finished), yet it serves no essential purpose, and is, in fact, entirely forgotten. Take away the doctrine of original sin, and substitute a doctrine of original righteousness, maintain that man has no

inherited taint, that he is naturally pure and that he could attain to heaven by his own efforts, teach, in short, that man does not need salvation, and the whole Pauline system falls to pieces. You have taken out the pivot and the argument will not revolve. It tumbles from its hinges and loses all its meaning. On the other hand, take away that unscientific theory by which the fact of original sin has in bygone days been explained, and the argument of these epistles remains entirely unspoilt. In fact, it is greatly strengthened. Freed from the "fall" theory, the whole system which we find in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, instead of losing any vital element, gains in cogency and coherence. With the theory of the "fall" the Cross of Christ cannot but be a kind of after-thought and no part of the original design. And, if so, then it is not so easily connected with the work of Christ as the final Crown and Consummation of the whole creative process. It can, of course, be fitted in, but not with perfect harmony and logical necessity. Without the theory of the "fall," on the other hand, the whole scheme becomes at once completely harmonious. Then from the first the whole great process was struggling on towards the Cross of Christ, and as the Redeemer of the human race He is the Consummation of the whole mighty work.

That a redemptive purpose underlies the whole process of creation is taught explicitly by Origen. The world, he says, was made by God as a place in which to purge and punish those spirits which have transgressed in a previous state of existence. The misfortunes of this life are a retribution for previous misdeeds, while its good things are a reward for

comparative innocence in that previous state of being ; and this is the explanation of many facts which to our limited vision seem unjust in the management of the world.¹

The weakness of this theory, as propounded by Origen, is obvious. It is sufficiently condemned by the fact that it contradicts the plain teaching of Christ. On more than one occasion our Lord said in the most emphatic terms, that misfortune in this life is not a punishment for individual guilt. This is a thing which cannot be explained away ; and it is final for a Christian.

But there are other difficulties. The theory does not fit the facts ; at least, it does not appear to do so. For the good often suffer far more than the wilfully bad in this life, and most sincere men have before now felt something of the perplexity which disturbed the Psalmist, who saw the wicked in such prosperity and coming to no misfortune like other folk. Are we to suppose that the good who suffer most in this life were in a previous state of existence greater sinners than those who are now, as a reward for their previous innocence, enjoying a course of prosperous wickedness ? The whole notion is involved in hopeless difficulties, and raises far more problems than it solves. It is needless to point out how utterly it collapses before the Cross of Him Who suffered more than all the sons of men and Who was yet eternally free from all touch of sin.

Some part of the difficulty Origen saw : he was unable to do otherwise. He could not shut his eyes to the great and often preponderating sufferings of the good.

¹ *De Principiis*, ii. 9, § 7 ; iii. 3, § 5.

And to meet the difficulty he suggested that the good were allowed to suffer with the bad as part of the whole great scheme for the redemption of the entire race. "Some of those," he says, "who are better men are ordained to suffer with the rest to serve those who are inferior to them, in order that they may by this means themselves become sharers in the patience of the Creator." Such language is an abandonment of the entire position. A world in which the good suffer with the bad for the benefit of the whole race is not a world in which all misfortune is a punishment for any previous misdeeds. The whole conception of punishment or vengeance has been eliminated.

It is not hard to detect once more the old enemy which has dogged the steps of theology from its cradle to the present day. This Being who makes an evil universe for the sake of taking vengeance on his foes, this truly Butlerian Deity governing the world by rewards and punishments, this great despot who apportions to each man the good things or the bad things of this life according as they have been merited in a previous existence, is a God possessed of an omnipotence consisting in irresistible force. This crude conception is responsible for all the unsatisfactory features in the theory; and when Origen is driven by the sheer compulsion of actual facts to modify his theory in such a way as practically destroys it, he comes at least within sight of an entirely different conception. By saying that the good, when they suffer, are made partakers of the Creator's patience, he stands within measurable distance of an omnipotence which cannot alter the facts of life, but can only endure them.

Origen, by his conception of the world as a great purgative system, had got on to the right road. But he was encumbered with an ungainly burden which impeded his progress. The wrong conception of omnipotence was not only a heavy load for him to carry on his shoulders, but by its awkward bulk it actually prevented him from passing through the humble portal of truth. Projecting on both sides with its great pretensions, it stuck in the narrow doorway. And the only real glimpses of the inner sanctuary which he was able to obtain came to him by reason of the fact that he was in advance of the burden which he carried, and managed also, under pressure of certain facts which he could not escape, slightly to loosen the cords which tied it to his back.

Remove this burden, and with it you remove all the anti-Christian and unphilosophical elements which make his theory as it stands unconvincing and unsatisfactory. What remains is merely the conception of a world which is one great purgative and redemptive process. This conception will fit all the facts of life and give a meaning to the whole universe.

That the whole creation of the world is a redemptive process is implied, though quite unconsciously, by St. Athanasius. And it is precisely the unconsciousness of the implication that makes it so instructive.

Adopting the ordinary Platonic language, Athanasius regards evil as ultimately unreal. "Things which are evil," he says in the *De Incarnatione*, "are non-existent, but things which are good are existent, since they come from God Who exists."¹ Again, in the same treatise, he speaks of "the Saviour Who has in

¹ iv. 5.

the beginning made all things out of things which are non-existent.”¹ Put these two statements together and press them to their logical conclusion, and the result is obvious. It is that, in creating the world, the Word of God has brought it out of a state of badness into a state of goodness.

Presumably St. Athanasius did not intend his words to be thus pressed. The truth appears to be that he is not wholly free from that confusion between actual and ideal non-existence which is so prominent in certain quarters to-day. When he speaks of evil as non-existent, he means an ideal non-existence ; when he says that the Word of God has made the world out of that which is non-existent, the non-existence which he means is an actual and not an ideal one. Through this loophole he would no doubt have escaped if driven to the point. Whether he would have had the right to do so is another matter, as will be seen presently. However that may be, it is remarkable that the language in which he tries to express the creative activity of God, if given a spiritual significance, means simply this : that God in making the world has brought it out of a state of evil into a state of good.

The same thing is taught by St. Augustine in a more explicit form. He, like Athanasius, maintains that God has made the world out of nothing, and he goes on to explain what this means. “Thou hast made heaven and earth not out of Thyself, for then it would be equal to Thy Only Begotten Son and hence to Thyself. And therefore Thou hast made heaven and earth out of nothing.”² This passage is clearer and fuller than the somewhat vague language of Athanasius ;

¹ *De Incarnatione*, xx. 1.

² *Confessions*, xii. 7.

and seems to imply beyond a doubt, when pressed home, that the raw material of the world is evil.

Many Christians, if asked what is the stuff of which God has made the world, would reply that He has made it out of nothing. There was, in the beginning, they would say, no existence except God; and the material of which the universe is fashioned owes not only its present form, but even its very substance to Him. He did not make it out of something which He found ready to hand, but simply created it instead out of nothing at all. Such, then, is the account of the matter which many would give; and in saying that God has made the world out of nothing they would, perhaps, mean really that He has made it out of His own Being. For if its existence is all derived from Him, and if, in the beginning, there was nothing except Himself, it seems to follow that His own Nature was the stuff out of which it was created.

This explanation of the phrase St. Augustine explicitly rejects. God, he says, did not make the world out of Himself; and that is the reason why He made it out of nothing. Now Augustine means, no doubt, that the world was created out of mere non-entity. But mere non-entity is really an unthinkable notion, and is also inconsistent with the Augustinian conception of evil. For he expressly maintains that evil is ultimately non-existent: "Sin," he says, "is nothing"; and again: "Only that which has no existence does not come from Thee."¹ From such language as this it is difficult to avoid drawing the conclusion (which Augustine would not have welcomed) that evil is the raw material out of which God has made the world.

¹ *Confessions*, xii. 11.

In other words, this world, in being created, passes out of a condition of evil into a condition of good. And that amounts to saying that in being created it is being redeemed.

Thus the world-process is a creation, and it is a redemption : the two words mean precisely the same thing when applied to God's action upon and in the universe. The only difference between the two is that the notion of redemption, being derived from the experience of the human heart, is a more vital and spiritual conception than that of creation, which is not derived from any such immediate experience. And hence, though the two words have, in this connection, exactly the same significance, it is the word redemption that will teach us the most, and bring us nearest to the hidden heart of the matter.

That the two words both stand for the same thing will become clearer if each one be taken by itself and examined separately.

The saints of God, and, in fact, every Christian on earth to the exact extent to which he is sincere, have all possessed a certain definite experience, wherein they are conscious of having been saved from the power of sin by the grace of God in some mysterious, unspeakable way. Having been born as children of wrath, they have, through the death of Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit, been brought into the family of the Heavenly Father. They have been adopted ; and, receiving that gracious Spirit which has made them sons of God, they have been able to lift up their hearts and to cry : "Abba, Father." No longer now dwelling in the outer darkness, they have come to sit in the bright radiance of supernal love. And this

power, by which they have been drawn out of darkness into the light, out of the kingdom of evil into the kingdom of God, has been that which they have known and experienced as their salvation and redemption.

Such, then, is redemption as it is felt at work within the human soul. Now let the category of creation be taken and examined in its turn. What does it really mean? This is a more difficult matter to treat, for we are here not dealing with the immediate experience of the human heart. We can but argue, therefore, by analogy and see whither this will lead.

When an artist makes a statue he has in his mind a certain ideal conception; but from whence it comes no man can say. This originating power is the essence of all genius; and, the idea being thus within the artist's mind, he is impelled to express it. And so he takes the block of marble and he shapes it to his thought, until the form of beauty which existed only in his mind now is present in the marble. He has taken away the marble's original shape and has given it a new one; and, in so doing, he has put there his own inspired conception and some portion of his own mind. Thus, to make a thing means this: it is to put into a certain material (or shall we say to evoke from out of it?) a shape which it did not explicitly possess before, but which existed only in the mind of the maker.

Apply this thought to God's creative work in the world. The harmony and order, the grandeur and glory, the design and adaptation of part to part which we see on every side in this most marvellous universe all comes from God, in Whom alone all reason, all beauty, all law and goodness dwells. All this the world derives from God, nor possessed it until He

was able to insert it into the great fabric. As on the wild night of chaos and disorder there gradually broke the dawn of day, at different points, where the random motions of the elements happened to light upon harmonious combinations, order and beauty began to appear; and, as the process of evolution continued, more and more the chaos tended to give place to something of that principle of order which is the very Being of God. Thus as the whole vast system first stumbled into being, and as with gradually growing aim and purpose it tended to fulfil an inner law, it was being brought out of discord into concord, out of darkness into light, out of evil into good. It was, through the patient endurance of God, and through His attractive power, finding within its texture a Divine principle which it did not possess at first. Such was the method of its creation.

So far so good. But God's creation of the world implies more than that. Not only did the natural fabric, in being brought out of chaos into harmony, owe its inward principle of order to His attractive influence: matter itself, which is the vehicle of the process, must be regarded as made by Him.

What does this fact imply? Does it mean that at a certain definite moment God called into being material particles which had not existed before? Does it mean that once upon a time matter did not exist, but that God in due course at last brought it into existence? Such a notion will not stand. Matter obeys its own necessary laws, and these cannot be abolished, nor could they ever have been other than they are. Matter is, then, indestructible; and as it always will exist so long as endless time shall last, even so it always

has existed from the first dawn of time which has no beginning. To speak, then, of a thing as made by God does not necessarily mean that it had a beginning in time. Matter had, in time, no beginning, even as it will have, in time, no end. And yet, like space which it fills, and like time in which it works, it depends for its existence entirely upon God ; for He alone is the absolute Being, and He alone is unconditioned. And though He reaches His own eternity by passing through the process of time and change and pain and death, and though He comes to His own unchanging perfection by means of His hard struggle with evil, yet His eternity and perfection, when thus attained, is found to be beyond all time and change, beyond all pain and death, beyond all evil and imperfection.

This is the mystery of Love. This is the final secret of the universe. This is the ultimate truth whose dazzling rays break through from the heaven outside into our earthly prison. Love we can see is absolute ; Love is complete and final ; Love exists as the one Reality on that topmost plane of Being where all transitory things are at last left far behind.

God thus possesses an absolute existence ; and because God exists, therefore there is time and space, and also matter for the same reason. None of these things exists by itself : they are but rungs in the ladder which finally leads to God ; and, but for the fact that God is at the top and must climb each stage to attain that ultimate state of being which is eternally His own, they would not be at all. And therefore, although they are indestructible and always governed by their own necessary laws, without beginning and without end, yet they are but contingent ; since they

exist, and must exist, merely because they lead on to Him.

This, then, is what is meant by saying that God created matter. It means, not that matter had a beginning in time, but that God is absolute and matter relative.

But does it not follow from this that God made evil? For evil too is relative, since it does not exist upon that final plane of being where God is all in all; and evil exists in the world solely because God is good. Goodness, as it climbs the ladder which leads to its own eternity, must have over against it a counter-foil of badness; and only so can it be truly itself. God is love, and love must suffer; and, therefore, because God is love, there must be evil. Now it has just been said that when we speak of God's creating matter the real truth suggested by the words is that matter exists only because God exists. Apply this principle to evil. It has been seen that because God exists therefore there must be evil for Him to suffer. Will it not follow that we may speak of God as creating evil?

Such language would be shocking to the conscience. Nor does the parallel really apply. Matter exists because God makes it the vehicle of good when it expresses His own Being through the majesty of this glorious world, through those sacramental rites and ordinances which are the essential shrine and expression of all religious aspiration and feeling, and through the whole of that physical life which, when touched by the grace of God, is itself one splendid sacrament. Evil, on the contrary, exists in this world, not because God can make it a direct means of expressing

Himself, but simply because God hates it and denies its right to exist. Evil, in a sense, depends for its existence on the will of God. But it exists, not because He consents to it (which He can never do), but because He does not consent. God allows matter to exist; but He does not allow evil. And that is why evil exists. If God consented to it, then evil would utterly cease. It depends for all its being on the denial and the refusal which it meets from the will of God. Hence, though it depends on His will, it cannot possibly be said that He made it.

To return to the question of creation: when we say that God has made the world, what is meant is that matter and its driving power of energy which, in the beginning, being subject to no law of harmony, was wholly governed by a principle of evil and consisted in brute force, has yet existed from the first dawn of beginningless time solely in complete dependence on the absolute existence of God; and that this primal chaos, in the course of ages, was gradually drawn into ever-growing harmony and purpose, and, in so advancing, was receiving a fresh form of beauty and order which exists eternally in the Mind of God.

It remains to ask whether the principle by which God's creation of matter and force has been explained will apply to His creation of the human soul. And here the guiding light of man's highest experience will make it possible to give an answer.

The great mystics all seem to unite in bearing testimony to one fundamental fact of their being. Having plunged down into those abysmal depths of their own heart, they seem, far beyond the reach of

human thought, to have touched a hidden Ground which is God. And, having reached Him in Whom they are eternally grounded, they have had it revealed to them that they themselves, in their true and ultimate nature, are eternal. In Christ they existed before the foundation of the world ; and in Him they are not the mere products of time, but, in Him are beyond all time and change. They exist in complete dependency upon God ; and yet, by the very fact of this dependency, they are independent. Their existence is wholly relative, for they exist only because God exists and has them eternally in His keeping ; and yet, by virtue of this very fact, their existence is absolute. For by being in God, their essence is free from all transitory shackles, and exists in its own right. Each man has within him something that is timeless ; and therefore one writer¹ can say that "Jesus is All Man," and another² that we are His very self. Hence, too, St. Paul could speak of redeemed humanity as the Mystical Body of Christ.

How it is possible for mankind to exist as individuals in God while God is yet a Person, is a vast problem which cannot be dealt with here. It is, in fact, the ultimate crux of any system which would regard personality as real. The answer to this difficulty is to be found in the writings of the great Christian mystics : here it must be taken for granted, and the truth must be stated with bald simplicity. God is a Person ; and in that Person is contained the true personality of each individual man upon this earth. And, because eternity makes whatever it touches eternal, therefore all mankind exist in Him not as creatures but as eternal beings.

¹ Julian of Norwich.

² St. Augustine.

Each man, in fact, exists because he has an eternal value and has a right to exist ; but he has that value, and that right, and therefore that existence itself, solely in God and because God is good.

Here, as always, the key to the whole question lies in the true conception of omnipotence. The existence of man simply carries up to an immeasurably higher point the same principle which is behind the existence of matter. God's power consists in love alone, and therefore He cannot coerce. Hence He did not at any given moment bring matter into being; and hence matter has always existed. His power cannot compel it either to be or not to be; for such a power would be brute force and not Divine omnipotence. He can, then, but allow it to exercise its own inherent necessity of existing, and can but allow that inherent necessity itself. And yet its whole existence depends upon His will ; for, in so far as it is good, it could not be at all without His permission and approval, and in so far as it is bad it could not exist but for His disapproval and forbiddance.

For matter, with its driving power of energy, is in large measure disordered in its movements and therefore displays a principle of evil. This monstrous thing God cannot annihilate. He can but forbid it. And just because He forbids it, therefore it exists. That is what is meant by saying it is evil.

As with the existence of matter, so with the existence of man. Each human soul exists because God allows it, approves of it and loves it. If God ceased to love any human soul, that soul would immediately sink into nothing ; but this is, of course, impossible. Each soul exists ideally and eternally because God is love ; and God cannot compel it either to

be or not to be : He can, by the omnipotence of love, do nothing else than allow it to possess and exercise its own inherent right to exist. But for the fact that God is love, the soul would not possess its own existence nor even the right to exist. Solely because God is love and nothing else than love, each human person possesses, in complete dependence on His love, an independent existence of its own.

And as God cannot, by the very nature of His omnipotence, impose upon any human soul that existence which it possesses, nor its inherent right to exist, but can only, in love, permit and welcome that existence and that inherent right, so too He cannot impose upon it any moral goodness. If He could do so, He would be using force. He can only elicit goodness from within, through the free activity of the soul itself and by His own attractive beauty. Nay, since His power consists in love alone, and since love must needs suffer all things contrary to itself, and since God must in patience endure that which He does not permit, and must suffer all things while, if so they will, they rebel against His goodness, it seems to follow that the human soul, while it exists solely because God is good, must for that reason be in the outer darkness of rebellion against His love. Eckhart and Tauler say that even those who are in hell are still grounded eternally in God. They might have added that, but for this fact, these souls could not be in hell.

What is good and what is evil ? Good is the principle of self-sacrifice which is perfectly fulfilled only in the Blessed Trinity : evil is the contrary principle of self-assertion. And hence all things, while they exist only because God is good, and while they depend for

their being entirely on Him Who is their true Goal and Essence and Nature, must yet be wholly evil except in so far as they have learnt to seek no longer themselves, but, being clothed in God, seek Him alone. And, in proportion as they learn to do this, they cease to be merely themselves by becoming, through self-denial, more truly themselves. Their original nature is transcended and changed into something divine, and they tend to become the exact opposite of that in which they started.

Thus it is that the brute force in which this world began existed because God exists and because He is good. And yet, being not yet clothed in God, it was at first wholly evil, and acted merely by self-assertion in its constant strife of one particle against another. Then, as it drew from God a principle of harmony, it ceased to be mere brute force ; and thus the different strands of vital impulse running through the world, while, in so far as they run counter to one another, they possess the nature of brute force and act by self-assertion, yet, on the other hand, display also the contrary principle of self-abnegation, since each one is formed of elements which have adjusted their conflicting claims and learnt to act for the good of the whole organism instead of each for itself. And at length, by amazing miracle, the vital force has, in the Person of Christ, been changed into a divine energy of healing and of grace springing upward from the earth to heaven, until it leaves earth far behind and is all transformed into that infinite activity of mere patient meekness which is the very opposite of force. Thus in God that impulse, which began as mere brute force, finds its true nature by at last attaining to a complete conversion of its being.

So too it is with human personality. Human persons exist, potentially or ideally, from the very beginning. And they exist because God exists and because He is good. But they are good only in so far as, having denied themselves, they are clothed wholly in God and seek Him alone by whose grace they can say : " I live, yet not I, but Christ Who dwelleth in me." While the ultimate nature which is the true goal of all their strivings exists in God and is good, yet they commence in the principle of self-assertion, which is entirely evil. They are, then, eternally grounded in God, Who is their final Home of Rest ; and yet from the beginning of time, just because of this fact, and because God's goodness cannot use compulsion but can only suffer evil, they are in the womb of outer darkness shut off from the sunshine of His Presence. Of this fearful degradation they are unconscious, even as the sleeping infant in the arms of a drunken mother knows not the taint which he has inherited from her. None the less a hideous degradation it is, and entails a legacy of woe.

Now good can come to know itself only by conflict with evil ; for which reason God must endure the Passion, and only so can He, in that complete self-sacrifice on earth, attain to His eternal self-sacrifice in the Being of the Blessed Trinity. And, as good knows itself through conflict with evil, so can evil come to know itself only through conflict with good. All conscious life springs only from such opposition.

Hence evil, as it seeks to assert itself and to know itself, must necessarily come into collision with good. And to do this it must enter into the time-process. Hence there is time and always has been time, and from the first dawn of those ages which have no be-

ginning or dawn, a principle of evil has been asserting itself, and, in so doing, has been at war with good.

But it is the nature of God, by patient meekness, to suffer ill, and, suffering it, to lead it into the paths of goodness. Even as He suffered the crime of Judas the traitor, and through it wrought our great deliverance, so does He ever act throughout all time. There must be a world-process because evil seeks to assert itself, and, in doing so, collides with, and is tamed by, that which is good. But this time-process, with all that it contains, God uses for His Own mysterious ends. Immortal souls lie imprisoned in the darkness of evil. They slumber still, as they have slumbered from the first : yet when they awake it can but be to misery and degradation. How can they be saved from that appalling fate ? The solution lies in that very world-process without which they cannot awake to consciousness. God sees a higher purpose to which it may be turned. It may become itself the very means of their redemption. In His patient hands it thus is made the appointed instrument by which they may at last attain to their own perfection and peace.

So then God waits, strong in the strength of love. He cannot fight ; He cannot struggle or resist : He can but wait ; He can but be Himself. And, solely by being Himself and remaining unmoved, He wins the victory. The forces of evil need space and time in which to assert themselves ; and God needs space and time in order that, by enduring their assertion, He may win His gradual triumph. Hence the whole process of the world, and hence the almost incredible slowness with which its purpose is fulfilled. In meekness, in gentleness, in long-suffering and patience God

endures the contradiction of blind and raging forces ; He guides them little by little, as they allow His guidance, into definite channels ; and slowly He changes the very things which thwart His tranquil power into a means for helping on His great redemptive purpose.

CHAPTER X

REDEMPTIVE CREATION (*Continued*)

THUS God uses the realm of space and time as a means of redeeming human souls. And thus in His own marvellous way He, by nothing else than the bare power of goodness, gives purpose to the whole vast system. Looked at from the point of view which its first beginnings provide, the world-process appears to be nothing more than the expression of a blind will to live and expand which drives the huge machine. A principle of self-assertion forces its way wherever it is able, submitting to a compromise only where it cannot help itself. Such a conception does not, indeed, explain everything, but it certainly explains much. But this same world-process, looked at from a higher point of view, is flooded with a glorious purpose which streams from the Cross of Christ. It is being led on little by little, and with vast pain and confusion, to a gradual fulfilment of God's eternal plan.

In trying to hint at the reality behind that mighty struggle, man can but use mere metaphors. And metaphors cannot actually describe the reality : they can but grasp at a faint shadow which eludes the hand that seeks to hold it. Nevertheless they have their value. The shadow can at least suggest the substance and can help us dimly to conjecture what its outlines are ; and, being the only thing we can possess, we

must perforce rest content with it such as it is. A metaphor is true so far as it goes. That may not be very far ; but none the less it leads us some way along the road and enables us to peer into the dim distance, where on the far horizon the earth and sky dissolve together into one indistinguishable haze.

There is, then, a power of darkness opposed to the kingdom of light. And this power of darkness holds within its womb the souls of all mankind. How can these souls be saved from this fearful bondage ? God cannot struggle : He cannot compel the darkness to relinquish its prey ; for He cannot use compulsion, since His power consists in nothing but His goodness. He must wait ; and, waiting, He knows that all may yet be well.

For He knows that this power of darkness will, by its very nature, assert itself. It will seek to bring to the birth the slumbering human souls ; and, in making this effort, it must enter into a time-process. And this fact will be God's opportunity. In that time-process it cannot but light upon some principle of good in the course of its endless struggles. Straightway it is enabled to achieve some result from its self-assertion. But this result, as God sees it, is itself a step towards His great goal of redemption.

It must be once more repeated that the world-process never had a beginning in time. But it is impossible to use metaphorical language without speaking as if it had. When it is said that the power of darkness enters into time it must be remembered that, so far as the mind can guess, this happened at the first moment of an unlimited process which never had a beginning.

Thus energy exists at first simply as mere brute

force and as the embodiment of self-assertion. And matter is the necessary vehicle without which it could not manifest itself nor, perhaps, exist at all. And yet matter is not essentially bad ; for, as force by the touch of God is ceasing to be mere brute force and is being changed into vital energy, matter is becoming the vehicle of a growing purpose and goodness. Matter, in fact, like force, and like the human soul, and like all things in the world, is a raw material which, while it cannot exist without some form or shape, is good or bad according to the nature of the form which it possesses. It is bad in so far as it is cut off from God, and displays a principle of discord ; and it is good in so far as, being clothed in Him, it radiates life and energy.

Matter is the meeting-point where good and evil can collide. And through this medium God, in His eternal patience, endures and, by enduring, subdues the evil. The blind forces of darkness at different points happen to touch the Being of the underlying Word of God ; and where they touch that Principle of goodness, forthwith a permanence is obtained amid the instability of the surrounding chaos. Thus in the course of countless æons God's everlasting law subdues by its inherent goodness the seething mass of nebula which now begins to whirl with ordered motions round a central axis. And from this beginning is ultimately formed a solar system moving in majestic concord as guided by an unseen hand.

The reign of law being now, at that lower level of existence, supreme, there follows a fresh stage in the process of the world. After mighty labour an arena has been built, and in it there is to be celebrated no light festivity of mirth, but a struggle far more intense

than that which was needed for the building's preparation. That arena, which has slowly risen after so much toil and confusion, is to be the scene of a grim tragedy : the spectacle to be presented is a gladiatorial show. A bitter struggle is to be fought out with much carnage and pitiless bloodshed ; and the victory will go to superior force or to superior cunning. So at least it seems. And yet perhaps it is not entirely so. Something will be gained by organisation ; and, finally, a bond of common sympathy may give to some of the combatants a strength far beyond their numbers. And perhaps, too, the day at last will come when the conquerors will learn to spare the conquered.

The arena is this earth. Upon its surface life appears, and, amid much discord and deadly strife of kind with kind, it struggles up from the existence of the planet to that of the animal, and from the animal to man. In its commencement it appears to be all chaos, even as were the beginnings of the seething nebula. But a closer view shows that even from the first there is at this stage of the world-process a germ of some harmonising principle which the previous stage did not possess. In the primal chaos each force was struggling solely for itself. But, as it happened to touch the underlying Being of the Eternal Word, it drew from Him a principle of harmony by which it began to exist not only for itself but also for the whole. Some goodness, drawn from the Divine Essence, had thus found a place in the fabric of the universe, and, being lodged there, it could not fail to be shown in the following stages of the evolution. And hence, along with the chaos and warfare of organisms struggling with each other, there is found a contrary principle of self-sacrifice

without which, in fact, the process could not continue. The protoplasmic cells, although each is struggling to assert itself against the others, yet have a counter tendency to exist in groups and to form the multi-cellular organism. And these groups are not hap-hazard combinations of external units. They appear to be due to an inherent tendency of an original cell to subdivide, and, by subdivision, to sacrifice itself even through this act of self-assertion. The cell, being now no longer an individual unit but a member of a family, must adapt its claims to the other cells forming the group, and must act in concert with them.

So too the plant or the animal, along with its instinct to struggle with all the rest for food and light and air, is also from the first obedient to a contrary impulse to sacrifice itself for its offspring. And here, once more, the self-sacrifice springs out of self-assertion. For the plant or the animal, in reproducing itself, is asserting its own existence, and it cannot except by self-assertion defend its offspring from their foes or obtain the nourishment to give them.

Thus at length the upward strivings of the vital principle give rise to man. At this point are summed up all the previous stages of evolution; and, in the human race, the carnage and warfare which has marked the process hitherto is still on all sides to be seen. Nay, it is here seen at its worst; for it is, in human history, intensified and attended with far greater horrors than before. No cruelty in the lower kinds is so revolting as the refined cruelty of man; no spectacle so hideous as man's internecine strife. All the warfare and confusion which the world has hitherto

displayed now reaches its most fearful climax : on every hand is battle and harsh discord as man asserts himself against his brother man.

Nevertheless that other principle of self-sacrifice and love is present from the very first in the human race, with possibilities of grandeur hitherto unknown. Because man is more developed than the brute, and in him blind instinct begins to give place to a mental life which thinks and wills and grows more conscious of itself, therefore the principle of love that exists in him is able to extend its scope to a wider and yet wider compass. From his own offspring to the family, from the family to the tribe, and thence to the city, the nation and the empire, it spreads abroad its being, until at last it can embrace within its sympathy the entire human race and all things which have their dwelling in the whole created universe. A vision of universal brotherhood begins thus to dawn upon the gradually awakening spirit of man as he realises more and more the unfathomed mysteries of his being. The vision draws him on ; it inspires him with noble purpose. Ever and anon the thick clouds of turmoil part, and through the rifts he looks upward to the azure heaven beyond, and descries a dream of brotherly love and peace where all men are at one. But the vision cannot be realised : the black storm clouds meet again and hide it from his view. And even when he sees it most clearly with his spiritual eye, the weakness of his mortal nature will not let him spring upward to attain to it and bring its glories down to earth. The principle of evil ingrained in the very fibre of the species prevents the human race from fulfilling the ideal. The groaning creation cries aloud for some realisation of the celestial vision. If such a

Being could but appear on earth He would be a pledge that the vision may be fulfilled, and He would, by His Spirit, help mankind to reach to those unattainable heights.

At length, in answer to that cry, is seen the culmination of the whole world-process. He Who is Himself the Ground of the whole creation, and of each unit's individual being, is enabled to enter upon the stage of the finite universe and so to live as Man among men. By supernaturally fulfilling the ideal of human nature He displays in His own Person the completed purpose of the world. Holy and undefiled and free from all touch of sin, He treads the common path of this finite life, and everywhere He sheds upon it a brightness and a blessing. His boundless love, tested and shown to be perfect by the endurance of the uttermost agony, fulfils and realises absolutely the ideal of human brotherhood. With that supernatural goodness all mankind may now identify themselves, and thus they may, through it, attain at last to the ideal of their own true being. Christ is the Consumption of the universe, and by that very fact He is its Principle of Redemption.

Thus, then, the Cross is the crowning act of the whole great cosmic process, and fits into its place as the keystone of the arch. In it the evolution culminates and thence derives its meaning: apart from it the whole great travail is a mere perplexing riddle, suggesting vague hopes and yearnings which it does not realise and substantiate.

Evolution is not, by itself, a sufficient ground for optimism. It suggests and hints that the final result may perhaps be well, but it does not teach that

it necessarily will. The optimism with which man views the vast process is drawn from a hidden instinct of the heart rather than from the facts he sees before him. True though it is that there is present from the first in all organic life some principle of harmony which was wholly absent from the primal chaos of the elements, yet it cannot be said that the process of evolution is necessarily an advance from worse to better things. An advance there is, but it is not always bound to lead to greater goodness : a development it always is, but it need not be an improvement. In its essence it merely leads to greater complexity, to more developed consciousness, to more complete personality. And this means that, as it progresses on its way, it produces beings who may be nobler than those that have gone before, but may also, for that very reason, be immeasurably more degraded. As it rises from the brute to man it produces a being who may be an angel, but may also, for that very reason, be a devil. And which of these two he is to be evolution does not greatly care. In fact she sometimes appears rather to favour the devil. The only essential thing for her is that she should bring into the world something capable of choosing one of these two alternatives—a being who can remain mere animal no longer, but must be (according to his choice) either very much higher than an animal or else very much lower—she cares not which.

Thus throughout the evolutionary process the patient goodness of God must at each point, by subduing the evil and harmonising the discord at that particular point, make ready the stage upon which the forces of evil may display themselves with greater

completeness and reality, so that, by being thus displayed, they may be once more subdued. The discord of primal chaos was evil so far as it went (for no discord can be otherwise); but it was evil in its most elementary form. Like a deformed skeleton, it possessed the wrong outlines, and any living organism conforming to that shape would necessarily be unhealthy: nevertheless the skeleton by itself is not a living thing, and, not possessing life, is quite incapable either of good or of bad health. It is the groundwork of the living organism whose nature it determines, and therefore it may, if it is deformed, be called without misuse of words an unhealthy skeleton; still it does not actually suffer itself from any sickness or pain. Just so the discord and strife in which the world at first began, though blind and all unconscious, can only be described as bad; and yet its badness was merely abstract and had no actual moral malignity.

These dry bones are destined, through some mysterious agency, to be one day endued with life. But, before this result can be attained, they must first be more or less straightened and reduced to symmetry. They are touched by the mysterious and unseen influence, and the deformity disappears. The skeleton, possessing now its proper shape, is gradually clothed, in some strange way, with flesh and blood; and there awakes into existence a living thing. But, though the deformity has been removed, the root of the trouble still remains hidden deep within the bones. The principle of decay is there unseen by the eye, and now that the living organism stands before us this principle begins to show itself. The organism is distorted and sickly, and the whole of its existence will be one long

struggle with the disease that is within it. Perhaps, by that vital strength which it has received from the mysterious fount of life, it may be able to conquer the disease and emerge into health and soundness; perhaps it may itself be conquered and fall a victim to the principle of corruption which is rooted in its fibres. We cannot say, nor does evolution seem to care.

The world-process has attained to conscious personality. The chaos is subdued, and man has appeared on the scene thus prepared for him. But his whole life, if he knows the purpose of his being, must be one ceaseless struggle against that moral chaos of unruly passions which rages in his soul.

Throughout the process of the universe, as the chaos gives place to a cosmos and the blind clash of hurtling elements is guided into the formation of this world, a platform is, as it were, afforded for the more complete display of the strife and discord. Upon the surface of this planet the conflict is renewed in more and more complete and developed form as the evolution rises from the plant to the animal and from the animal to man. So too in human history the increase of civilization, while it brings with it a growth of refinement and intelligence, brings also, as the counterpart to this, fresh possibilities of deliberate wickedness which were hitherto unknown in human life. A civilized man may be far better than a savage; but for that very reason he may be far worse. And finally He Who is the Crown and Climax of the process could only be completely perfect and absolute goodness by gazing full upon the totality of evil. Christ's love, to attain to its own true being, must meet and must

endure, and, in enduring, must renounce the whole developed principle of hate.

Whatever, at any stage of the process, are the possibilities of good, exactly equal are the corresponding possibilities of evil; and the converse is equally true. The two contrary possibilities always exactly balance one another: over against material order is material disorder, and, so far as the world does not display the one, it must inevitably display the other; over against beauty is ugliness, and, so far as a thing is not beautiful, it must be ugly. Finally, over against moral goodness is sin, and, so far as a man is not governed by the principle of self-sacrifice, he is governed by the evil principle of self-assertion. Good and evil, as we see them in this world, are not things existing by themselves, but are always states or conditions; and that which is not in one of these states is, to that extent, in the opposite one. Hence nothing is vile in itself; and hence the very things which in their first commencement, and apart from God, are wholly bad, afford precisely the raw material out of which God can bring His good results.

Amazing beyond all range of human thought it is to see the gradual transfiguration of all things in the world as they come under the influence of God. All things begin in self-assertion and the struggle for existence, and yet out of these beginnings they can be changed into something spiritual and holy.

This process has been already traced in the transfiguration of brute force into that energy which, gaining in heavenly purpose, is finally seen, in Christ, as something wholly Divine. And the same process is at work in all departments of the world. All the beauty of

this glorious universe is merely a by-product which has gradually arisen out of the mere struggle for existence. A tree, for instance, must live, and in so doing must assert itself. It is true that its various parts co-operate and thus sacrifice themselves for this common end ; but the fact remains that the tree, in struggling to maintain its existence in the universe, asserts itself against other things around it, and seeks to use them for its own good. The first essential, and the only thing that evolution seems to care for, is this fight for existence. And yet out of this unpromising cause there comes that delightful greenness which clothes the landscape with beauty and bears a message to the heart of man. The colour is, so far as its origin goes, the merest accident. It was not put there for the sake of giving man delight ; but has arisen simply because the chlorophyll in the leaves is needed for the existence of the tree. And yet man, seeing it, knows that it reflects a brightness from some ideal world, and, as he looks upon it, his mind is uplifted into communion with the Invisible. Somehow the clash and clang of the fierce struggle to exist has, by purest accident, elicited a responsive vibration from the chords of celestial harmony which are beyond these narrow bounds, and, in the beauty of the world, it floats upon the ear—that music vaguely felt and dimly understood—and sinks into the mind with healing and with strengthening power.

So too the very nature of the senses which admit the message into our inmost being. The eye and ear were fashioned, in large measure, through the struggle to exist. And, more than this, both sight and hearing are, in their essential nature, based not on the life of

contemplation, but solely on the life of active self-assertion. It has been shown in recent years that they arise and exist merely as a kind of arrested physical activity. There is an object before me, and the natural impulse within me is to reach out to it and seize it and make it my own. If I were a plant I would automatically respond to all such stimulus, supposing I were within the range of its influence. But since a man, or in fact an animal of any kind, does not act automatically, the response is arrested. This stoppage produces the sensation by which I behold the tree before me and hear the rustling of its leaves. And thus out of the blind instinct of self-assertion there spring the faculties of sight and sound. The struggle for existence and the hard law of necessity itself opens a chink in the prison wall through which we can peer with wistful astonishment into the regions of the golden day and listen awestruck and astounded to the echoes of heaven's deep organ tones.

So it is that eating, which is the first necessity of all physical life and is the primary expression of the self-assertive principle, acquires from God a mysterious meaning. When we take food, we destroy some form of existence and sacrifice it to our own well-being. And, though this is not an act of sheer violence (for the food that is taken co-operates with the system that absorbs it, by being suitable for its consumption), yet at the root of the action is that self-assertion which is the very essence of the struggle to exist. And yet the taking of meals in common becomes a bond of brotherhood, and finally is, in the central sacrament of the Christian Church, the shrine of that ultimate mystery in which the Christian knows that all his spiritual life

is drawn into his being only from the redemptive Death of Christ.

So too is selfish passion transfigured into all that is most sacred in life, and Christian marriage becomes the fit emblem of Christ's union with His Church. And selfish anger, selfish shrinking of the individual from his own pain, selfish violence of brutal rage, all contain, in a distorted form, the raw material out of which God can, by patient meekness, bring the noblest and the best results, enriching human life; until at last the process is complete, and these things have all been for evermore redeemed from their base condition and are, in Christ, transformed into His holy wrath at all wrong-doing, His tears of heavenly compassion, His divine and absolute courage of meek, unselfish love.

Even man's sense of humour has arisen in the same strange way. The primitive savage who loved to torture his unhappy victims would gloat over their dying agonies; and this feeling, in refined and civilised man, becoming much diluted, appears as the natural tendency to smile at the small misfortunes of others. There is thus originally something slightly unkind about the sense of humour. A joke must be at somebody's expense; and, in laughing at a person, we feel ourselves to be his superiors. His ludicrous and undignified position pleases our own self-love and flatters our vanity. We therefore enjoy his discomfiture, and that is the essence of the joke.

The sense of humour has, then, like all things in this world, a selfish origin. And yet here again the touch of God can change what seems so unpromising into something that is good. This thing, as we see it in St. Francis or St. Paul, is one of the crowning

Christian graces. The want of it is always a defect, often showing a lack of human sympathy, and being sometimes disastrous in its results. In speculative matters theology has suffered more from this than from most other causes; and, in practical life, a sense of humour would have made religious persecution impossible.

And the extraordinary change, by which the relics of a hideous cruelty have been transformed into the delicate perfume of a subtle virtue, has been merely this—that the principle of love has touched it, and, touching it, has turned it from darkness into light. Even so, dark fogs and vapours, lit up by the light of the sun, lose their harsh repulsive gloom and become a sea of glory.

We try to comfort a child who meets with some trifling misfortune. The trouble seems to us a mere nothing, but to him it is a great deal; and therefore we put ourselves in his place and try to dry his tears. The same misfortune happens to a grown man, and we laugh, and may do it not unkindly. Why so? Because he is a man, and it will seem but a small thing to him. To try to comfort him would be degrading him. By treating the thing as a trifle we are showing our respect; and true respect is the expression of true sympathy.

Moreover, a thing may owe its incongruity to nothing but the respect which we owe and feel towards the man to whom it happens. Our sympathy with him gives us a sense of his great worth; and hence we feel the incongruity of his undignified position. And in precisely the same way our sympathy may bring home to us the oddity of some mannerism or

peculiarity by which he is distinguished. For instance, a friend of ours may have a kind heart, for which we love and revere him, and, along with it, a rough manner which alarms and scares all strangers. If we did not know his goodness and love him for it, his manner would repel us: it would strike us as merely unpleasant and not at all ridiculous. We should not then see in it the slightest incongruity, because we should regard it as the natural expression of his character. But, since we know him so well, we are filled with mirth and amusement. It is so incongruous that one with such a kindly disposition should have so gruff a manner! Our whole sense of the absurdity springs from our sympathy with the man and from the very depth of our respect and veneration. We mimic his gruffness and cut our jokes at his expense, and we enjoy the exquisite humour of the thing just because we love him. And we feel that, if he could see us, he would join in the laugh himself and would at once appreciate the spirit of our mirth. He would see the absurdity, and would be pleased to feel that we understood his true character well enough to detect the discrepancy between his manner and himself.

And, could we but discover the good that lies somewhere in all mankind, we should learn to laugh at many things which at present, through our want of sympathy, cause nothing but annoyance. We should learn to see that many peculiarities of manner are really an awkward attempt to express something that is noble and eternal, and thus their very oddity would be to us an earnest of mankind's real greatness. And, learning this, we should begin to derive a pleasure from this source; and brotherly love would impart to us a

new faculty of humour. Such a sense of humour we see perfected in Christ, Who, with the tender insight of infinite love, could see, struggling through the natural limitations of Peter, a hidden character of untold strength and value. And thus that quality which began its career on earth, in large measure, as mere savage delight in another's pain, is, in Christ, finally redeemed and transfigured into heavenly love.

And so it is, to take the broadest illustration of the principle, that matter itself, beginning as the mere vehicle of random conflict and of that which is evil, is gradually being redeemed throughout the whole world-process as it becomes the medium of expressing all forms of beauty in the glories of the grand creation, in man's own works of chiselled marble or of painted canvas or of music from rich organ pipe or well-tuned string, or in man's noble deeds of kindness and of heroism performed with this mortal clay. And finally the process receives its perfect meaning when there is revealed on earth in a body formed of matter Ideal Perfection's very Self.

Thus matter is the medium in which a spiritual existence develops, and, by developing, expresses its unfathomed powers. And matter in itself is nothing, but derives its value from the goodness or the badness of that spiritual principle within it. Even so a sheet of paper may be written over with blasphemy or else with holy texts, but in itself is merely the medium and has no value of its own. Matter is such a sheet of paper; and yet, unlike the paper, it can never be a blank. By its very nature it must have upon it either the writing of God or else that of the devil. The characters are part of its own inherent nature, and

without them it would cease to exist. But those same letters which at first spell blasphemy and shame can, through some mysterious influence which is hidden from the eye, shift over the page and change their places, and, by this rearrangement, spell instead the glorious message of God. And thus the paper itself, from being an object of horror and disgust, may come to win, instead, our reverent admiration.

This will explain the teaching of the saints. Speaking from their own experience, they tell of the things that they know. And, in their utterances, there is always to be found a certain strange discrepancy. St. Paul is a conspicuous example. Knowing as he did that the flesh warreth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, he holds the flesh to be the seat of the evil principle. And yet he regards the human body as the temple of the Holy Ghost, and he speaks of human marriage as a type and symbol of the most sacred of all spiritual mysteries. The body is to be subdued, and yet it is not to be crushed ; and, while it is a clog which drags man down to earth, it yet provides him with the wings on which he may rise to heaven.

The reason becomes quite plain if the world is a redemptive process, and if matter is the medium through which this can alone take place. A spirit which is, by the process of the world, being drawn out of the regions of darkness and evil into the Kingdom of heavenly Light, finds itself in this world with certain lawless impulses deep seated in its physical frame. And these impulses refuse to obey the higher nature, for the lawless principle seems inwoven into the very texture of the body. Why is this except because the whole personality of the man is thus inwoven into his

body, and that personality is tainted? Before him lies a celestial heritage and a home beyond the stars; but behind him are the powers of earth which have thrust him on to the stage. And therefore he is born as, in great measure, a child of darkness possessing still within him a legacy of ill. His personality, though partly good, is also partly bad, as he at present possesses it; and the corruption of his nature cannot but express itself in the lawless condition of his bodily passions.

The whole purpose of the evolutionary process, as it is viewed by the eye of God, has been to erect, as it were, a platform on which the final work of redemption could be wrought out, and on which, as a means to that great end, man could be brought within the sphere of time. Since each step of advance in evolution has been due to some contact with the underlying Word of God, it has, indeed, been possible to produce a human race possessing from the first some tendencies of good. Nevertheless the primary object of the entire world-process has been, not so much to produce a good spiritual being, as to produce a spiritual being at all. The machine grinds out a thing half angel and half devil. A hideous spectacle; yet, be it so, if so it must. Before this being passed through the machine he was a devil—slumbering, perhaps, but still entirely bad. Now that he has been pushed through its revolving wheels, he is capable of being changed, however hopeless the task may seem, until he may become completely angelic.

So does some purpose appear behind the apparent futility of the world; so does there stream from the Passion of Christ a light on this dark riddle. Why

was man brought into the world with a nature so corrupt? It was a dreadful necessity, and yet it had to be, and good has issued from it. Though man was born corrupt, yet with the angels' tears which greeted the event there were mingled smiles of welcome. Though man can be brought into this world only in a sinful state, yet it is well that he has come into being, and his birth gives purpose to the travail of that world which has produced him. But how can that possibly be? Why is it well that he was created? How can the angels rejoice over such a dread event? If he must be created sinful, would it not be better that he were not made at all? Not so. Terrible as is the anguish and degradation that his uneasy strife will bring into the world, appalling as is the spectacle of a being born in corruption, yet it is best that he should come into existence upon this earth; for only so can he have the chance of working out his own salvation. He may not use the chance; and yet it is of infinite importance that it should at least be his, for him to use it if only he will. So it is that the world-process has issued in the formation of a being, tainted indeed, yet capable at least of adoption into the blessed family of God.

And therefore there runs throughout the whole New Testament an apparent contradiction. God loves the world, for He sees within it glorious possibilities.¹ And yet the world is opposed to Him and He saves the believer from its power.² For, in spite of its grand possibilities, it is, at present, saturated with evil. So too with the government

¹ St. John iii. 16.

² St. John xv. 18, 19; xvii. 14; etc.

of the world. God is the ultimate Ruler and is the Lord of heaven and earth.¹ And yet Satan is "the prince of this world," or even "the god of this age,"² who, sitting on a throne of heaven, grinds the whole human race beneath his heel.³ All things on earth are in God's keeping, and yet the kingdoms of the earth belong to Satan, who, until his final overthrow shall be accomplished, exercises despotic sway over all mankind.⁴ This great discrepancy exists throughout the whole New Testament simply because it exists, in the first place, throughout all human life.

And a similar contradiction is to be found through all the process of evolution. Not only human society but also the physical constitution of each animal or plant, and even the very structure of the material universe itself illustrates the same great fact. Each thing is maintained in its equilibrium by a kind of compromise between conflicting laws. And these are all in their ultimate meaning good ; and yet, since they do not express their meaning perfectly, they are, to a large extent, actually bad. The earthquake and the pestilence are the result of certain necessary laws which, just because they are laws and are consistent, to that extent are good. But, in so far as they conflict with the needs of man, they acquire a different character ; and thus what are, from one point of view, God's beneficial rulings, become, under another aspect, the pitiless workings of an iron destiny, and to that extent they are evil.

The world is struggling towards an unification which

¹ St. Matthew xi. 25 ; St. Luke x. 21.

² ii. Cor. iv. 4.

³ St. John xiv. 30 ; xvi. 11.

⁴ St. Matthew iv. 8, 9 ; St. Luke iv. 5, 6 ; x. 18.

is still very far off ; and the process starts, whether in the inorganic, the physical, or the social and moral sphere, always in much the same way. It always begins at various independent points, at each of which an internal consistency is, so far as possible, obtained ; and thus various laws, at these several points, come into being. These laws are now brought into contact with one another, and straightway found to conflict. They must therefore, by mutual self-adjustment, give way to a higher law which can embrace whatever is truest in each one of them. Thus kind strives with kind, nation with nation, individual with individual, until, by mutual compromise, all learn to dwell together. And thus the process can find its complete fulfilment only in that heavenly kingdom where all mankind and all the strands of which the world's great cords are woven shall be completely gathered into one and attain their perfect unity through the redemptive power of Christ.

And the conception of evolution as a great redemptive process, in which the forces of evil are to be gradually won into obedience to the law of good, throws light on another perplexing problem. Few things are more strange, and yet few more obvious, than the lavish wastefulness shown on every side and at every stage of the work. The marvellous economy of Nature, which can bring such good results out of the most unpromising material, exists upon a background of reckless prodigality in which many a fair promise of fruition is tossed into the void or trampled into the mire of oblivion. Of a thousand seeds, but one may bring its fruit to full maturity ; and of a myriad eggs, but one may be hatched into life. Nature sows with

heedless blindness, and leaves it for mere chance to decide whether or no her sowings shall be fruitful. In all forms of organic life the same reckless waste meets the eye; nor is it confined to the organic sphere. From the very beginning of the universe it has been present on an even more stupendous scale; and the most astounding display of reckless wastefulness is to be seen in the vast spaces of the sky strewn thick with heavenly bodies.

Whether or not any one of the other planets which throng the boundless regions of infinite space be, or has ever been, inhabited is a question to which, in the nature of the case, no definite answer can be given. But this much can be suggested: that there is everything to be said against the theory and nothing positive to be advanced in its favour. The number of adjustments which were necessary to make life possible on this earth is so enormous that it appears incredible that they could ever all at once occur on any other of the countless million heavenly bodies; and, while the possibility that life may take other material forms than those which it possesses on this planet is one, of course, which can never be disproved, yet it is a mere hypothesis and rests on no basis of argument. And, even if some lowly forms of life have come elsewhere into existence, the chances are immeasurably against the process ever being crowned with the production of an intelligent and moral being. Considering the immense and almost insuperable obstacles which bar the way of progress, the astounding thing is that such a being has managed to struggle into existence even on one planet and after countless millions of ages.

And while there is nothing but mere surmise and vague conjecture in favour of the theory, there is against it the whole analogy of the universe so far as we know it at all. Those who believe some of the other planets to be inhabited are always influenced by the same consideration. This earth, they say, is but an insignificant mote amidst the mighty sum of things, and is not, as was once supposed, the centre of the universe. It was shot off incidentally from the general mass, and is quite an inferior body, occupying a subordinate position in the great revolving system. Why should this unimportant planet be favoured above the rest? Astronomy shows us that the universe does not exist for the sake of this globe. In fact, the whole earth might be burnt to ashes by a comet or some other heavenly body, and the loss would hardly be felt in the great sum total. It would be a mere ripple on the surface of a puddle left by the sea in a forgotten nook of some inland creek. The tiny forms of life in the troubled pool might regard its motion as a vast disturbance, but the ocean would scarcely be affected by so small a trifle. The little shrimps within the pool used to think that their home was the centre of everything. Now they find that they were mistaken: the ocean does not exist for their benefit. And therefore it is incredible that it does not teem with mighty fish far greater than they. It is incredible that none of those countless planets which move through the stupendous tracts of the universe should be inhabited by beings perhaps far more wonderful than man.

Such is the argument. But to what does it really amount? To very little. Even if one or

two of the planets, or a hundred or a thousand, are inhabited, and that by beings far more marvellous than man, yet the problem remains: What, then, is the use of the remainder? The wanton waste is scarcely diminished. Ten thousand planets compared with the vast sum total are less than a drop in the ocean. The difference they would make would be quite negligible. It would not count.

Moreover, the argument is founded on false premises. It rests on the notion of a God whose power consists in force. And this obsession affects even some of those who pride themselves on their freedom from all theological beliefs. For, if they do not believe in a personal God guiding all things with His Hand, they believe in a kind of fatalistic intelligent Principle, and they believe that this Principle must act in a more or less rational way. Remove this notion, and the argument evaporates. God's power does not consist in force, and therefore a great part of the universe is not intelligent or rational at all. God, by patiently waiting, may be able out of these blunders to win good results; but in themselves they are mere blunders, purposeless, brutish and blind. If we must reject a notion for its irrational stupidity and badness, then we must reject an enormous part of the world as we actually know it. And therefore, unhappily, the very fact that the theory seems utterly monstrous may really be the very strongest of all possible arguments for its truth.

Throughout the universe there is unbounded waste; and this is especially true in the lower phases, where there is no higher power of animal instinct or human reason to exercise a restraining influence. Thus the

analogy of the whole world-process would make it natural that the stage which preceded the production of any form of life should display this prodigality in its most stupendous form. It is therefore only in accordance with what is known of the rest of the evolution that, of all the unnumbered planets which throng the myriad solar systems, this insignificant unit in a possibly quite inferior system should be the one spot where human life has struggled into existence.

God's infinite goodness is confronted with boundless possibilities of evil. As He surveys the conflict of discordant elements which is continued in more and more explicit form from stage to stage of the evolution, it is, broadly speaking, but at one point that He is able on each occasion to produce the direct line of advance. In order to bring physical life into existence a vastly complex combination of nicely adjusted circumstances was required ; and, throughout the length and breadth of the universe, at one point alone, in the course of countless æons, were the necessary conditions fulfilled. And thus again, as the process advances, amid the numberless ramifications of the tree of physical life, it is only along the main trunk that the fulfilment of the necessary conditions is able to lead on at length to the production of man. In human history, again, the same process is exemplified, and it is generally "the remnant" that saves and passes on the tradition of higher things. And, finally, it was only after the struggles and labour of centuries that one obscure spot was at length prepared for the advent of Him in Whom alone the whole great system could find a meaning. Truly such a prospect gives point to

the words of him who said of old that God is very patient because He is eternal.

The appalling majesty which belongs to man as the express image of God is enhanced ten-thousandfold by the fact that his physical, social and spiritual life is each moment suspended over a yawning abyss of destruction from plunging headlong into which it is but just preserved by what can only be called a combination of miracles. The production of man's physical frame is a result that has been at length achieved from amidst the struggles of conflicting forces which, but for an infinitely complex system of mutual adjustment, threaten each moment the annihilation of the entire race; and again the organised existence of human society is each day being threatened by those forces of human strife and passion on whose unstable compromise it was, in the first place, enabled to gain a foundation. And in the inward life of each human spirit the same fact is again to be seen. The spiritual being of the upward striving soul is itself in a condition of unstable equilibrium; and in that inner life must be recapitulated all those mighty struggles of the material and social world which have been the necessary antecedent conditions underlying, in the first place, the possibility of its coming into existence.

Such, then, is the path of advance in the lower world of Nature, and such again is the path of advance in human life and history. The whole of this process acquires a value if it is a means to the redemption of immortal souls. In that process God is working by the power of gentleness and endurance amid the unlimited shocks of evil, and gradually He is able, by that

bare power, to realise His redemptive purpose. The forces of evil are strong, but God's weakness is stronger still; and, throughout the chaos and confusion the victory is already His, because in His eternal Being the Redemption is eternally complete.

CHAPTER XI

THE REDEEMER AND THE REDEEMED

THE work of redemption is for evermore fulfilled in Christ ; and the universe attains its final Goal in Him. Through His Life, His Death, His Resurrection it throbs with glorious purpose : through Him all things are full of an eternal hope. And yet the process has not reached its end, nor ever will have reached it until all mankind shall be made perfect. The great redemption, eternally complete in Him, must through struggles and much labour be attained in every human soul. This is the object of Christ's work ; this is the purpose of the entire world process ; this is the ultimate aim towards which the universe has tirelessly, through myriad æons, pursued its labouring course.

That vast flood of healing waters which, in the beginning of all things, was pent up and kept back by obstinate barriers, has gradually, in course of countless ages, trickled through in this place and in that, wherever a tiny crack or fissure appeared in this opposing mass ; then, in course of time, as the openings have by slow degrees grown wider through its action, it has poured in greater and yet greater volume ; and, as the streams have emerged on the other side, they have joined their several waters more and more into one great channel which has cleft its way over

the surface of time, until finally, in the Person of Christ, the whole barrier has been swept away. The world is now covered with the mighty flood, and earth is filled with heaven. All around us the waters are spread, and we float in our frail earthly boats upon their quiet bosom. And they are there for us to use them ; nor, until all men have done so to the full, will the purpose of the world be complete. Each must wash in the healing waves till every spot is gone ; each must let down his little bucket into those crystalline depths and drink the waters of life and be made a new creation. Then, and not till then, will the whole great labour be at an end ; then will God have attained at last to that completed rest in His creation for which He has longed without ceasing from the beginning of all time.

Thus the mighty struggle, which is for ever perfected in Christ's eternal victory, must still go on in every human soul through the work of the Holy Spirit deep within its being. And, as man fights and wrestles and presses on his way, he peers into the dim unknown and seeks to read the future. Will his labours be successful ? Will he reach the goal of his journey ? Will it be finally well with the world ? Will all come at last to their home ? So man sends out a cry of longing into the caverns of the Infinite. And from the distance is borne back again the echo of his human voice, yet changed and wonderfully deepened even into something divine. Mournful it is with a depth of heavenly sorrow, and yet triumphant with an impassioned peace. It does not answer his question : it merely repeats it once again, and yet with such a tranquil confidence of very longing that man is

soothed and cheered with an ineffable comfort. No certain answer is given ; and, indeed, none is possible : but there is borne into his heart an everlasting hope. Strengthened by this, he can labour and can fight and can press on undaunted towards his goal. Enough that he perform his part : he does not seek to know the unknowable. He merely seeks to do his work ; and, doing it, he possesses a calm and trustful peace.

Yet some there are who, for want of a better occupation, have involved themselves and others in long disputes on Predestination and free will. If all mankind, they argue, are predestined in the counsels of God to that end which He sees to be right, then what place is there for human freedom ? Each man is bound at last to come to that goal of bliss or woe which God has determined for him. What matters it, then, whether or not he try to live the higher life upon this earth ? If he is destined for salvation, then, no matter what his life may be, he cannot help being saved ; if, on the other hand, reprobation is his appointed end, then, for all his efforts and aspirations, he is bound in the final issue to be lost. It seems, therefore, that man has no free will ; for if he had one it would clash with the fact of God's Predestination. And thus man becomes a mere puppet, moved by invisible wires which are held by a hidden showman.

This grotesque absurdity has, unhappily, been taken in all seriousness. It is that theological system which, worked out with rigorous logic, has immortalised the name of Calvin. The wickedness of it is obvious : the better sense of mankind has discovered this fact long ago. But the intellectual folly of the whole conception is not so generally recognised. It has

generally been met with the reply that rigorous logic breaks down when applied to human life and to divine mysteries. "The feeble human intellect" we are told, "is bound to get into difficulties when it tries to deal with such a matter as God's providential management of the world. The best thing is to leave such questions alone. We are not intended to know too much. We must beware of intellectual pride. Such speculations are not becoming in the creature. The fly on the window-pane cannot understand the ways of a man : how, then, shall a man understand the ways of God ? Calvin's logic is undoubtedly very consistent ; but that is just his defect. He is too clear and logical. He seems to think that God must be bound by syllogisms. He does not realise that there is a kind of divine inconsistency which our poor intellects cannot understand. We must be content, then, with holding these two contradictory truths of God's Predestination and man's free will, and believing that somehow or other God can reconcile them by a process which is higher than the ordinary rules of logic."

To such shifts has the common sense and the conscience of mankind believed itself to be reduced in its efforts to repel the attack. It has at one stroke made a present of all the intellectual ground to the invader, and, while firmly entrenched in its own spiritual experience, it has believed itself compelled to admit the foe right up to the walls. It has not realised that the intellectual outworks were also impregnable, and that, had they been properly defended, the foe would never have got a foothold within the precincts. Some of the garrison have, indeed, tried to defend them, but, owing to the worthless nature of their weapons, their

attempts have not been crowned with success. They have urged that we must distinguish God's power from His foreknowledge. God, they say, predestines each man to bliss or woe; but this merely means that He, by His foreknowledge, sees from the first to which of these two goals each man will finally come. He from the outset foresees the end of the drama and the action of each scene, but He stands aside and does not use His omnipotence to bring it to pass. While foreseeing all things, He gives to each man his freedom and allows him to work out his own life to its own conclusion.

Such antics recall the movements of a squirrel in a revolving cage. There is often considerable agility, but never any progress. The captive turns his cage round and round with fruitless zeal, but he still remains inside it and it holds him to the same spot. All progress is impossible until he has burst the bars. How weak they are he does not guess. His intellect has fashioned them out of a vain delusion which it never thought of testing, and now it is held a prisoner in its own creation. The workmanship was pretty good, and hence the apparent solidity of the bars; but the material is such wretched stuff that a touch, if properly applied, could shiver them to fragments.

And, as a matter of fact, every Christian who does his duty with sincerity of purpose finds that his prison bars have disappeared. Perplexed and troubled by the riddle of predestination and free will, he gives it up in despair. He seeks, instead, to do the thing that lies nearest to his hand, to fight for the cause of justice and of right, and to help his brother man. The speculative puzzle he leaves to solve itself. And, strange to say, it does solve itself even in his own

experience. The grace of God is with him, and he knows, by its power, that he is predestined to eternal bliss. He knows also that, enabled by the grace of God, he must win his way to that great destiny by his own free deliberate action. He has not, perhaps, formulated his experience into an intellectual theory, nor does he profess to have devised a speculative solution of the problem. But he does most certainly possess a practical solution. The bars of his old cage may sometimes begin to take shape before his eyes and threaten to obstruct his vision, but the moment he acts and tries to do his duty they cease to cause him trouble. Even if he still sees them before him they do not hamper his motions. He thinks that they exist, but it is an optical illusion ; for he moves with perfect freedom through the place where they seem to be.

The bars were fashioned by man's intellect ; and yet his intellect is not to blame. The fault lay in the nature of the material. Intellect did its best with such odd seraps of rubbish as were given it ; and performed its work as well as it could—in fact only too well. But for this fact the result would not have stood so long as it has. The remedy, then, is not less intelligence, but better stuff for intelligence to work upon. If the meal is bad we do not blame the mill, but the corn which was given it to grind. So long as the intellect is given stuff to work upon which is derived not from man's religious experience, but solely from his fancy, so long will the result be unsatisfactory.

And so the answer to Calvin is very simple. There is no need to take refuge in a logical inconsistency. Logic is an excellent thing, and we cannot do without

it. There is, of course, a final point of divine perfection where thought transcends itself, but human thought it is that maps out the path which leads there ; and heavenly things are certainly not irrational. We must apply the rules of logic to them with rigorous exactitude ; and only so can we reach that final point where logic is at last left far behind. Whenever in this world logic appears to break down it is not because anything is wrong with the laws of the syllogism, but because the premises are wrong. So it is on the present occasion. Calvin's rigorous and unanswerable logic leads to results which are anti-Christian ; but that does not prove that logic is a bad thing. It merely proves that his major premise is wrong. Change that, and the same rigorous logical process will lead to something very different. There is no need to present the foe with the outworks of the fort. Entrenched in his own spiritual experience the Christian may undoubtedly feel safe, although he allows the enemy freely to wander in the outer fortifications ; none the less if he would, or could, but draw a correct ground-plan of that castle in which he safely dwells, he would see that the outworks are part of it and that the intruders have no business within their precincts.

Once more, then, there meets us on our path the old familiar phantom. The notion of a knowledge and a power in God consisting in earthly force and earthly wisdom again obstructs the way. Instinctively we pause and shrink from the rash impiety of putting it to the proof ; instinctively we begin with awe-struck wonder to return upon our steps, resolved to seek, if possible, some other outlet, or, finding none, to resign

our fruitless efforts. But a still Voice calls us back to the task ; and its tones are the tones of Eternity. This bids us to press onwards in the sacred quest of Truth ; this bids us never to rest until we have gained our proper liberty ; this bids us to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good ; this bids us test with fearless courage the spectre which bars our progress. In obedience to this Voice we turn once more to the great adventure. We draw the sword of reason and thrust at the threatening foe ; and at once the steel blade passes through the unsubstantial form. We uplift before its face the shield of Faith emblazoned with the Cross of Christ ; and the spectre cannot stand before that blessed symbol. Into thin air it melts away ; and the path lies open to freedom.

If God is love, and nothing else than love, then the whole problem of Predestination and free will, while it gains in marvellous mystery, ceases to be a riddle perplexing to heart and brain. Deep mystery is there, even the ultimate mystery of our being, but no self-contradiction. Predestination and free will form the two sides of one harmonious whole ; and, so far from their being incompatible, the one is quite impossible without the other.

God's power consists in love. And love cannot compel, but can only endure and suffer and wait. By its very nature it must leave all things to follow their own bent, trusting only to attract them to itself by the sheer patient beauty of its goodness. And therefore, just because God is omnipotent, for that very reason man is free to work out his own salvation or to reject it if he will. All Christians have experienced this fact ; and theology justifies herself only in so far as

her theories explain the experience of the human heart. Were she always true to this great principle, she would never lose the respect of a single honest man.

The same thing applies to God's omniscience. There is no need to distinguish God's knowledge from His power, and to say that, while leaving to all mankind their own free will, He yet foresees each act which they shall perform. In fact the distinction is radically false. God's knowledge is His power, for both are the same thing as His love. And, as His omnipotence cannot do, nor seek to do, many things which are possible to earthly power, so His omniscience cannot know, nor seek to know, many things which belong to the scope of earthly knowledge. God's power deals with eternity, and is the power to remain unmoved amidst the shocks of time. His knowledge also deals with eternity, and is that vision which beholds an eternal root of good in all things. It does not foresee the future, but sees, in its own eternal present, that good which always is and cannot be destroyed.

This is the knowledge which love must always have, even the knowledge which consists in love itself. In this life love alone gives to men the mystical eyes which can see in all things, even the low and degraded, a hidden and eternal worth which no earthly glance can descry; for to the eyes of love all things are full of mystery, and eternity dwells within their very core. Love alone guesses at the secret of the universe, and, bereft of its light, man is indeed blind and ignorant. Endowed with this heavenly grace the unlettered peasant knows the truth which lies in all things: without it the most learned sage knows less than nothing. Only friendship and sympathy can

see the possibilities of good lying deep in another human heart ; and only the poet's profound and holy sympathy can feel the deep passionate life which speaks through the beauty of Nature. And this alone is knowledge—this insight which reveals to a man the mysteries of human life or of the created world. True knowledge is nothing else than a contact with the hidden reality of things and with the ultimate secret of the universe. All else is mere opinion, for it does not penetrate our being to the centre ; nor has it any value except so far as it helps this one true knowledge to come to its own eternal heritage. This is the function of all earthly things, this and nothing else. And as the mind, through earthly science, is filled with a sense of the unspeakable wonder of the world, it is raised aloft in a pure ecstasy of love, in which earthly understanding is caught up and changed into heavenly knowledge, and all its earthly nature is thus left far behind.

God's omniscience, then, means this : that, by His perfect love, He can see in all created things eternal possibilities of good. He sees the world and every human soul *sub specie eternitatis*.

His knowledge follows exactly the analogy of His power. It was seen that His power, though it cannot coerce, yet, where it enters into this world, gives added vigour to the vital impulse, as is shown in the marvellous physical endurance of the saints and in the miraculous powers of Christ and of His Church. And it was seen that this is due to the nature of the vital force which, drawing strength from that eternal Fount, converts divine power into its own natural energy. And it was suggested that the miraculous powers of

Christ belonged to the limitations of His earthly Life and were left behind and transcended when, having passed beyond the bounds of earth, He carried with Him all physical vitality and transmuted it into pure spiritual being. The same great principle applies to God's knowledge. God does not foreknow what will happen on this earth: instead of this He knows eternally that ultimate truth of Being which is in all men—even that Truth which is Himself. He sees all men eternally in Christ, and sees Christ eternally in them. But, though God does not foreknow, yet a measure of foreknowledge has often, by His gift, been the possession of certain individuals on earth. That vital force, which, working in the mind, produces earthly knowledge, may, through prayer to God, draw from Him an added strength; and, drawing it from Him, it must convert this heavenly sustenance into its own earthly being and increase its own innate powers. Hence, as it assimilates His omnipotence of meekness into a heightened vital force, so it assimilates His omniscience of eternal knowledge into a heightened power of prevision. And therefore Christ on earth, as part of His human limitations, possessed a large measure of foreknowledge. But, having now attained to His Own complete eternity and passed beyond the limits of all time, He has risen above both past and future, and above all foreknowledge, and only beholds eternally what IS.

The ship, by tacking, sails in the teeth of the breeze from which it nevertheless derives its motion. So force, blown upon by that power of God which is not force, gains strength to follow its own direction. So earthly knowledge too, blown upon by that divine

knowledge which seems like ignorance, is strengthened and pursues its course towards that far port where it will be at rest, and, having found the true object of its desire, will at last for ever cease.

Earthly knowledge is necessary ; for without it love could not awake into fully conscious life. All science and all art and history and human thought help the mind to realise the deep mystery at the heart of things : they lead us to the top of a high and dizzy ladder from which we can, entranced, descry with vague and dim astonishment the wonders of human life encompassed all around on the far-stretching horizon by the infinite love of God. But, as man stands on the topmost rung, his wings begin to grow ; and, if he clings to the ladder now, it has failed of its complete purpose. And, in the case of all mankind, fail to some extent it must. In Christ alone there was no failure, for He alone is the perfect Man. He, by the mystery of His Nature, was not chained to the ladder ; but, having mounted it, sped upward on the untrammelled wings of the spirit, and, soaring thus through those boundless altitudes, He left it far behind.

Such, then, is God's omniscience : it is merely that perfect love which is Himself. And therefore God does not foresee all human actions. He sees only eternal things ; sees the root of goodness in all mankind ; sees the divine image hidden beneath the ape and the tiger in many a degraded human life ; sees the ideal which He has for all men. And, seeing this, He cannot despair. He knows not what any man may do on the morrow ; but He knows that the heart of man can never find its own repose apart from Him Who is its own true life. And, knowing this, He can

for ever hope, so long as time shall last. Thus God is omniscient, for He knows the ultimate truth of our being; and at the same time man is free, for it lies with himself whether or not he will struggle to attain it.

And thus the conception of an infinite power and knowledge consisting in nothing else than infinite love cuts the Gordian knot of the Predestination controversy. All men, without exception, that have ever lived upon this earth or shall in future days be born, are predestined from before the foundation of the world to endless bliss; for in Christ they are rooted and grounded, in Christ they have their own eternal being, in Christ their proper destiny and heavenly home. And this eternal predestination is that great day, without beginning or end, which exists beyond this world of time in God's unchanging present.

It may be urged that there are sayings of the Lord which point to a different conception. "To sit on My right hand and on My left hand is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared."¹ This seems to suggest that certain individuals are chosen out of the human race for eternal bliss, and that God foresees the course by which they will finally attain to their destiny. But the words do not necessarily bear any such meaning. They can be explained equally well by the conception of a knowledge which exists beyond this world of time and does not foresee the future, but rather sees eternal Reality in an eternal present. Christ cannot give to any man the gift of eternal blessedness or peculiar honour in heaven: it rests with the man himself, by the grace of the in-

¹ St. Matthew xx. 23; St. Mark x. 40.

dwelling Spirit, to win the great reward. And, so far as each is learning the lesson of life, so far is he already obtaining that heavenly treasure. And, obtaining it, he finds with wonder and amazement that he can do so only because it is eternally stored up for him in the changeless Being of God ; he finds that all along it has been God Who has been calling him, God Who has been enabling him, God Who has been working and striving in all his groping efforts ; and this is the fact which has given to his struggles all their worth and value.

The gift lies intended for all, locked up in God's eternal store. And human effort, enabled by God's grace, is the key which alone can unlock the door and draw the treasure forth and use it. And to the exact extent to which a man uses the treasure, to that extent is it prepared for him. His own efforts must decide whether the gift is to be, not merely held in store for him, but also prepared and ready for his use.

So too of that mysterious day and hour which was unknown to the Son while He dwelt on earth, but yet was known to the Father.¹ God sees eternally the whole issue of all history, beholding it as one perfect and eternal event summed up changeless and complete in the one great Consummation. That day and hour on which He for ever gazes is no future occurrence : it is an unchanging fact which He beholds in that everlasting present where He dwells beyond the realms of time. That unchanging fact is the Goal of all things. It is perfect humanity ; it is complete Redemption ; it is God's Crucified, Risen and Ascended Son ; it is Himself. So far as human history tends towards that Goal,

¹ St. Mark xiii. 32.

it has a meaning : so far as it moves in other directions, it has none. And on the far-distant horizon is a point where the curve of time at last touches the circumference of eternity ; and there time is no more. It is caught up beyond itself and transformed into that eternity which changes all things into its own nature, and, by this change, fulfils them. There time itself becomes that day and hour seen eternally by God above in His eternal present. That day and hour God, while He dwelt in time on earth, could descry as a future event, but how far off it was He could not say : that same day and hour He, as dwelling beyond time, beheld and beholds eternally in His unchanging present. For one and the same indivisible God dwelt on earth as the Son and dwelt in heaven as the Father, passing, by His Sonship, through time to that eternity which He possesses beyond time by His Fatherhood. And therefore, as passing through time He looked forward with uncertainty to the future, and yet, as being beyond time, He looked upon all things as eternally complete. Then finally, having passed through time and exhausted all its possibilities of suffering, God attained through time to His own eternity, and passed beyond foreknowledge of the future to the completed knowledge of His Own eternal present.

All men are predestined to salvation in Christ Who is their Life. And the whole purpose of our earthly struggles is to fulfil our heavenly destiny. This glorious heritage has been discovered by a favoured few who, in it, have found peace. The saints of God have reached this root of their being. They, by the grace of God, have learnt with wonder unspeakable

that from the first beginning of the world they were destined, in Christ Jesus, to eternal bliss. They, beneath the outer shows of life, have come down to their own dark foundations, and have found that their whole being rests upon Eternity and is itself eternal. They, through the darkness, have stretched forth the hands of faith, and have touched their own great destiny. They through shades of earth have looked, with sight enabled by God's grace, and have seen their heart's own heavenly home. And, seeing it, they have known, by the heart's unerring instinct, that it is the goal which God beholds eternally as the end of all their wanderings. Even while perplexed and lost they strayed in paths of error, God saw this goal as their true heritage: before they came into this world, before the world itself was made, from the first dawn of infinite time, this was their glorious birthright, and in it God eternally beholds the purpose of their being.

Thus the doctrine of Predestination arose out of a mystic experience. And here, as always, the confusion which crept in, came from another source. Predestination, as the Mystics have experienced it in their own lives, is a doctrine full of unspeakable comfort, tinging with light from the far-distant horizon the obscure paths of earth. This heavenly truth has fallen a prey to the harpy claws of anti-Mysticism. By this it has been rent in sunder, its life destroyed, its beauty all distorted, and its putrefying corpse cast forth upon the Church, there to spread corruption, pestilence and death.

The saints of God have known themselves, by blessed experience, to be predestined to the bliss of

heaven ; and from their experience, as it is found in the New Testament, and especially in the Epistles of St. Paul, Predestination became a doctrine of the Church. Upon this doctrine unmystical theologians fell. The saints, they said, are predestined to heaven ; therefore it follows that those who are not saints are not predestined to this goal ; therefore, since God foresees all things and can do all things, they are predestined to hell. And thus, by such human follies as these, has the vision of glory and celestial day been changed into a hag-ridden nightmare of man's grovelling and ignorant fancy.

These poisonous cobwebs are swept away by that Christian conception of omnipotence and omniscience which alone explains the experience of the Mystics. The saints of God have known their own predestination. Amidst their wanderings, so they have learnt, God still had seen the purpose of their existence. Amidst their failures the everlasting Arms had still been spread beneath them, though they knew it not. God could not force Himself upon them : He could but wait until, by their uneasy struggles, they chanced to touch that unseen Presence and made the great discovery. And so it is with every man upon earth. God has predestined all to the same great glory ; but He cannot drive them to it : He can but wait in patient hope. Amidst the follies and confusions of this earth, the same eternal home awaits each human being if he could but see it, and, seeing it, press on to reach it and be at rest.

This, then, is Predestination ; this is our glorious destiny. It changes the whole of earthly life and gives a purpose to all human effort. It nerves the arm to fight and gives the heart fresh courage. It is the

only possible foundation for any reasonable optimism. Apart from this the world is a blank and hideous waste. Bathed in its glorious light the whole prospect acquires a heavenly meaning.

And yet the Christian optimism is no such thing as often usurps the name. It is no light-hearted, cheery indifference to the darker facts of life. It does not hold that all is bound somehow or other to come right in the long run. Such a pleasing view of that grim tragedy which we call the world comes not from the Gospel of Christ but from a very different origin. It comes from human fancy. If God is almighty and all-loving, then, it is argued, He must somehow make all things turn out well. He cannot have made a single human soul merely that it should, after all, be lost. By some means or other He is bound to bring all mankind at last to the realms of bliss.

Such an argument is far better than the Calvinistic notion. It does at least presuppose that God is good. And yet it rests on precisely the same foundation of sand on which Calvinism is built. If God's power consisted in coercive force, then the argument would have some solid justification. Such a God, having, by His coercive force, made all mankind, would, by the same coercion, be morally bound to bring each one to heaven at the last. But if God's power consists in nothing but in love, then the whole structure collapses. By love God permitted and enabled the race to come into being, since they had that right to exist which love could not but allow. And by love alone God possesses the secret of their destiny. He cannot compel them to reach it: He can but hold it ready for each human soul in His eternal Hand; He can but

wait till each shall seek to find it, and, seeking, shall look to Him for that light and strength without which the search must be in vain. That all men will one day attain to their true home, is a hope which, though wrong and wickedness should continue for countless millions of ages, will never perish from the heart of God nor from the Christian who has found his eternal rest in Him. None the less, because God's power cannot coerce but can merely endure and hope, it is, and must in the nature of the case be, impossible mathematically to demonstrate any such cheerful certainty. So long as endless time shall last there will always be hope that each man may reach his home; but there can never be a mathematical proof that all men will. That must rest with each man's own free choice; and, if there could be a mathematical proof of what his action will be, then his choice would lose its freedom.

In all ages of the Church the question has been asked: Are there many that be saved? And very different answers have been given at different times. But all are equally futile, for the question has no meaning and admits of no answer whatever. And this fact we learn from the example of Christ Himself. He taught that all mankind are predestined to salvation, for He says that the angels of all little children look eternally on the face of the Heavenly Father. Again, He calls to Him, not some few men, but all who feel the need of rest for their souls; and such a call is meaningless unless all are predestined even though they do not respond. And his final commission to His Apostles after His Resurrection embraces in its scope the entire human race. All, then, are predestined to glory. And yet to the question: "Are there few that

be saved?" He will give no reply.¹ There is no hard-and-fast answer. The answer is, in fact, being worked out in this world of time by each human soul for himself and others, and is, for each within the world, precisely what he, by his own life, chooses to make it. Therefore the Lord gives no solution of the perplexity: He gives none because there is none to give. The only reply possible is an exhortation to effort: "Strive to enter in."

This exhortation is, however, accompanied by a warning: "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." And throughout the Gospel there is the most uncompromising language as to the punishment in the other world awaiting unrepented sin. This has been a difficulty to many, and there has been more than one attempt to water down the natural meaning of the words. But they admit of no such expedients. What they say is plain, and they mean what they say. Unrepented sin can lead to nothing else than misery, and this misery can have no end. "Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." The reward of obedience to God is everlasting life, and the punishment of disobedience is everlasting death. We cannot explain the punishment away as annihilation, or as lasting merely for a time: Christ's language will admit of no such interpretation.

The question of everlasting punishment has been the subject of much controversy, in which both sides have perhaps been equally far from the truth. Both parties through following the same guiding light have floundered into different parts of the same theological

¹ St. Luke xiii. 23, 24.

bog ; and even then they have never guessed that their guiding light was after all nothing but a will-o'-the-wisp. The offender is, of course, once more the wrong conception of omnipotence. Get rid of that, and Christ's words can be accepted as they stand, and need not be explained away in deference to the imperious demands of our conscience.

If God's power consists in force, then punishment is something inflicted by Him on the sinner. But if this is the case, then it is impossible that the punishment should last for ever unless we are to regard God as a cruel and vengeful tyrant. Everlasting punishment, then, is an impossibility : we are obliged to assume this if we are to believe that God is good. But such a pleasing solution is in flat contradiction to the teaching of Christ. Here, then, is a dilemma. Either we believe in the goodness of God, in which case we must resort to all kinds of shifts in the vain attempt to nullify the stern teaching of Christ ; or else we refuse to descend to such futilities, in which case God stands before us as a monster of vengeful brutality.

Turn away from this *ignis fatuus*, and follow the clear light which the truth itself sheds upon the way. These confusions are left on one side and a firm path is felt beneath the feet. Christ's words may be taken as they stand, and their truth rests on the very fact that God is good.

God's power consists in love alone ; and hence He cannot impose any penalty, but can do nothing else than be Himself. If He is said to punish men, such language must be explained by the rule which, according to St. Augustine, covers all God's activity. God does

not act upon mankind : He simply waits and leaves them to act in relation towards Him. He is spoken of in Scripture as desiring certain results or of performing certain acts, but He does not, St. Augustine says, really awake into desire or activity. By the power of His goodness He causes men to form these desires or to do these acts ; and that is His way of working.

It follows, then, that when God is said to punish men, He does not inflict a penalty. He simply remains eternally good, and by this fact He causes them to be punished. It is, in truth, the necessary corollary to the right conception of omnipotence that man's punishment is not, and cannot be, anything done to him, but must be nothing else than that which man does and is. To live in the presence of the truth, to possess God, to fulfil the ideal of human nature, this is joy and peace ; none other is worthy of the name. Earthly prosperity may blind a man's eyes to this ultimate fact of his being, and may give him a false and worthless comfort in the midst of a misspent existence ; but in the next world all outward things will be gone, and the man will have nothing else than what he is ; he will possess either the true happiness which comes from within or else none at all. And even in this present life the struggles of a Christian against pain and temptation contain a true satisfaction, compared with which all selfish prosperity is as sawdust. In this world we can see a gleam of this great truth ; in the next world we shall be saturated with its light, if now we are faithful to the truth we see.

Man's true happiness, then, is to possess God, his misery to be without Him. And man cannot be in either of these states except through his own free action.

God will reward us, and does reward us, by being our peace and joy ; He will punish us, and does punish us, by being that same peace and joy, the separation from which is misery. His presence will always be heaven : to be turned away from Him will always be hell. If heaven is everlasting, then hell is everlasting too. They are two mutually balanced possibilities, and neither of them can ever lose its nature. God cannot quench the fires of hell ; He cannot save men against their will ; He can force none into heaven. So long as any human soul shall reject Him, so long will it be, by its own act, in torment.

So long, but no longer. Christ teaches that the fires of hell are everlasting, even as are the joys of heaven ; but He does not teach that any shall be everlasting in them : He does not say that any shall be for ever lost. Even the words about Judas do not bear this meaning. And it is, in the nature of the case, impossible to say that any must be finally in perdition. Man is free, and all depends on the use he finally makes of his freedom. Moreover, there is a possibility of goodness in all men, even the worst, for all draw their ultimate being from Christ, in Whom they are predestined. This possibility cannot be destroyed ; and therefore, so long as endless time shall last, there will be a hope for every human being.

The Christian, therefore, may dare to be an optimist ; he can be nothing else. And his optimism must rest, not on any belief that God can save mankind against their will, but on the strong conviction that the good, solely because it is good, cannot but attract and transform each human being, even the most hardened, who consents to receive its

influence. The Christian knows, by an absolutely unassailable and intuitive conviction, that there are in every human being certain higher cravings, however crushed and smothered; and these can find repose in nothing else but the perfection of God. And, though it is impossible, without regarding man as a mere machine with no full power of choice, to say that any human being must of necessity attain to his own ideal peace, yet nothing can utterly destroy those higher cravings of the soul; and nothing can change the everlasting Goodness after which they reach. *Fecisti nos ad Te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te.*

This is the root of that eternal hope which is in Christ, and which is seen throughout His earthly life—a hope resting on no powers of coercion, but on that patient strength of endurance which goodness, solely because it is good, for ever possesses. Thus it was that He wrought no signs to convince the unbelieving, that He stood in unbroken silence before His judges and accusers, that after His Resurrection He showed Himself to none of His foes. He would not compel the assent of the unwilling, because the only assent which has any saving power is that which is deep-seated in the very essence of the soul, far beyond the reach of all external compulsion. The tranquil hope which shines through the earthly life of Jesus Christ is a hope that consists in the sure and confident knowledge of man's ultimate needs and nature: "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice"; "My sheep hear My voice, and I give unto them eternal life, and no man can pluck them out of My Hand."

We see, then, in Christ an unfaltering conviction that there is within each human soul something which can never rest until it finds the Eternal Object of its true desire. And yet He does not say that the task will be an easy one. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."¹ The salvation of one human soul is infinitely difficult—is impossible without the grace of God. Nor can it be otherwise. The ultimate happiness of man can consist in nothing but complete self-sacrifice, and this is far from easy. Something of this heavenly happiness St. Lawrence had when he jested on the gridiron: it was possessed perfectly by Christ at the moment when He died of sheer infinite anguish and horror. It is a happiness so absolutely sublime that we cannot realise its nature, so absolutely contrary to all earthly instincts that the natural man recoils from it with shuddering dread. And therefore the complete salvation of one human soul is a miracle compared with which all other miracles of Christ's earthly Life are as nothing. But this astonishing work God can perform, and will perform, in every human life that will admit Him: "With man it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God." The omnipotence of patient love is, in fact, at last completely shown in human salvation. As each man flings open the doors of his being, and admits that gracious influence, this miracle is working deep within his life. Love enters in and touches all things in him; and touching them transforms them into something new and holy. Selfish passion, selfish pride and force of emotion, desire and

¹ St. Matthew vii. 14.

character, all are changed by that magic touch into the intense consuming passion of self-sacrifice which, rushing on like some great torrent, sweeps the man inwards into deep hidden recesses of his being. There in the far and infinite distance he descries a final state towards which he strains his eyes, attracted and delighted, yet trembling and appalled. At that last point self-sacrifice shall be made perfect, and salvation shall be complete.

This, by transcendent and terrific miracle, is possible to the grace of God: apart from Him it is impossible. No natural power can save the human race or any individual: the task is beyond all the ordinary workings of the universe. The natural forces actually in the world will not, apart from the grace of God, lead to the final perfection of mankind, nor does the Gospel of Christ contain any such comfortable assurance. Instead of this, we find in it a doubt whether, at the day when history on this planet shall have run its course, there will be found upon the earth any who are able to receive the gift: "When the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith upon earth?"

This adds the last astonishing marvel to the omnipotent work of Christ; this crowns it with a blinding glory too great for mortal sight. From the beginning of beginningless time He has been patiently waiting and insensibly moulding the world, that man might dwell within it; through human history He has been gradually guiding (as still He guides) the human race by the same sweet patient influence; then once in time, in the same patient way, He passed through a perfect human life crowned with the uttermost agony that can ever be borne or conceived: all this to save mankind:

and yet even now the work for which He suffered, and yet suffers, may to all appearance fail—nay, it must fail until all mankind by their own free choice shall turn to Him—and yet, in the midst of His apparent failure, Christ possesses the tranquil conviction of being throughout victorious.

Such is God's astounding victory ; such is the only conquest worthy of Him. Not only in its method, but in its very nature and result, it differs from all earthly triumph. God does not, by enduring defeat, rise finally to the demonstrably certain fulfilment of His purpose. Eternal hope there is in His human heart, but no absolute demonstration. God's true victory consists in the power to endure apparent defeat and failure throughout all time, and still to hope unchanged through the strength of His Own patient eternity. If He could not endure this last and uttermost pang, His love would not be omnipotent. We cannot doubt, at least we cannot cease to hope, that all will at last be well, simply because in Christ all is already well ; but there is no proof beyond that which comes from the intuition of the heart and from a Divine hope which cannot die. And though all should not be well while time shall last, yet Christ would be victorious in the midst of His defeat. For He still would remain the same—would still be perfect Love, and still would be able to hope.

The human race, as it struggles after the higher life, is walking with tottering steps along a razor's edge. And it is this fact that makes the history of man at once so infinitely pathetic and so infinitely grand. The pathos of human life consists in its apparent futility ; for though a soul here and there

may, with vast difficulty, seem to cross that perilous ridge, yet none can, by so doing, turn the rough and narrow path into a broad and beaten way for the generations that are to follow. The most that any can apparently do is to point out the almost invisible track, and how, with much agony and toil, it may at length, though scarcely, be traversed by each. And indeed much of the goodness in this world does not seem at first sight to serve even this guiding purpose, but is rather expended in making it possible for men to live at all than in helping them to live the higher life. If it were not for the elements of moral goodness which there are in all mankind the human race would long ago have become extinct through internecine strife; but those lofty instincts of harmony and brotherhood, of mutual forbearance and self-sacrifice, which alone have rendered possible the continuance of the species, have, by achieving this result, but continued the existence of that which is one vast engine of misery and sin. It must, in fact, often appear that man's higher qualities have done little else than oil the wheels of a ruthless car of Juggernaut which, but for the existence of those higher qualities, could not have run its murderous course.

So it is that from an external point of view the history of the human race must appear pathetically futile—a very tragic farce. But it is precisely from these elements of waste and failure that the spirit of man, aided by God's grace, can draw the grandest harmonies; for each act of sacrifice, even though it fail of its immediate purpose, must bring him who makes it nearer to the ultimate truth of his being, wherein he finds that he is strong, and, possessing the secret of

all things, can abide in hope and patience. And moreover, he who has attained to some realisation of this holy mystery will learn to trust that, by this very fact, he may, in ways unknown, be helping along the upward path countless numbers, whom he has not seen, of the seekers after truth, both near and in far distant lands, both living now upon this earth and destined to belong to future generations.

This consciousness of a great and noble purpose in each individual life consists not in any dull and idle apathy, but in an intensity of life and energy which in all its fulness eternally exists in Christ, and is, in the individual soul of man, itself the soul's redemption. And this cannot be brought to pass by the inevitable working of an external law, but must spring from the individual's own unfettered and inward activity. The redemptive work which has been slowly winning its way through the unnumbered æons of this world's evolution and which has been finally caught up and made perfect in the Death upon the Cross has been performed not in order to save the individual the trouble of working out his own salvation, but solely to give his struggles a meaning and a hope. There is, treasured up in the changeless Being of Christ, a final ideal and goal of perfection for each human life; and this ideal is an intensity of free activity in which all the struggles of this fragmentary earthly life are finally transmuted into that which is their true and final meaning.

That ultimate state must be an existence of pure and unbroken peace. There man is for ever at rest, and contemplates eternally the Face of perfect Beauty. But this state of perfect rest is a state of infinite

energy ; this passive contemplation is itself an intense activity. In that condition of perfect Being is caught up all human thought, emotion and action ; and there it is changed from earth to heaven, from human existence to divine. There all those powers of human character which, upon this earth, seek to express themselves in the life of action, and can find no other outlet, will be transformed beyond themselves and will attain their full perfection, in that state of still tranquillity, through the eternal exercise of all their capacities. In that final state the life of contemplation and the life of action are at last for ever one ; and there the struggles of this earthly life will be, not so much abolished and done away, as fulfilled by being raised above themselves into a joyous energy of perfect freedom.

And by the light of this fact it is possible even to look upon the spectacle of this world, if not without misgivings, yet at least without despair. Because the final state of contemplation which is the soul's ideal perfection must itself be a state of completed activity, therefore it can only be reached through the conflict with, and the conquest of, evil. And, though there are daily enacted on this earth scenes of horror such as no human being may dare to think that he could face, yet there is no Christian but has felt that his Christian faith—to the extent to which he has really made it his own—has given him, simply and solely in the fact of his triumph over the sorrows and temptations of his individual lot, a joy such as a life of ease and indulgence can never give. And it is this truth that suggests the thought that the ultimate joy of heaven is to consist in a triumph over possibilities

of evil such as the mind dares not (and indeed cannot) at present conceive—even that triumph which, because it is already fulfilled in the Redeemer, is therefore, by God's grace, to be fulfilled in each of the redeemed. And thus the Christian may pass through this earthly pilgrimage, not indeed in self-trusting confidence, but at least in trembling hope, knowing that only by means of an evil world can God be seen to be good, and that there could be no perfect human joy but for the background of darker possibilities: knowing that the hard and cruel facts of this life may, just because of their cruelty, become, through the aid of a higher Power, the means of evoking the inner forces of human character, and may thus, by the struggles of each human soul, be transformed from the bondage of a bitter servitude even into a necessary instrument towards accomplishing the world's redemption.

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